

Aboriginal health worker training – an important role for pharmacists to improve quality use of medicines in Indigenous communities

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Aim

To provide a series of practical training sessions about medicines to Aboriginal health workers (AHWs) in South Australia and expand it to meet the needs of other AHWs in remote communities.

Method

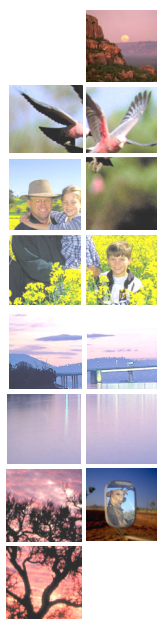
During 2001, the pharmacists of the Port Augusta Hospital combined with local pharmacists and South Australian Centre for Rural and Remote Health (SACRRH) staff to provide 20 one-hour training sessions to the staff of the local Aboriginal health service, Pika Wiya. This program provided the platform from which we are developing a two-part CD-ROM for: other pharmacists or nurses to utilise in their training roles for AHWs; and for AHWs to use alone for educational purposes in their own isolated sites.

Results

AHWs, registered nurses, medical students and doctors attended the fortnightly sessions run during 2001, and feedback for all sessions was very positive. Experience in providing this service previously to AHWs in other sites serviced by PAH pharmacy staff greatly assisted in getting the correct format for the presentations. The training program is currently being transferred into a digitised format suitable for distribution by disk to remote sites. Accreditation is being sought by educational bodies to include it as part of the required training program for AHWs. The local program indirectly encouraged a review of the current pharmacy services at Pika Wiya Health Service. This has subsequently resulted in the employment of a part-time pharmacist.

Conclusion

The 2001 training program proved very successful, however the digitised version will allow greater access to a larger audience and if accredited, provide a formal qualification within the AHW training program. Pharmacists can play a major role in improving quality use of medicines in Indigenous communities by ensuring AHWs understand the medicines they work with. Health workers will be better armed to communicate necessary information about medicines to their clients.



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