

The young person health check

Connolly K¹,

¹Sexual Health Indigenous Health Worker, at Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service Aboriginal Corporation.

Background/Purpose:

There are persistent disproportionately high rates of exposure to BBVs and STIs for people living in regional and remote parts of Queensland, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Poor access to harm reduction services in regional and remote locations contributes significantly to these rates of exposure. In response to the increasing rates of STIs/BBVs syphilis and HIV outbreak the Queensland government and Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service Aboriginal Corporation developed the “Young person health check” back in 2010. The program was designed to identifying chronic disease risk in young people and detection of STI and BBVs for vulnerable populations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People under the age of 25. In 2012 funding was pulled by the Queensland government however the initiative was contained and funded by Gurriny and incorporated into our model of care.

Approach

The young person health check is a focused 10-minute STI/BBV + chronic disease screen. I am the coordinator of the program and work alongside the peer recruiters, doctors, nurses, health workers and SEWB workers. The program runs yearly for four weeks usually during the months of March/ April however COVID has push it back to September this year. Our community approach is through door-to-door education and awareness from our peer recruiters, radio announcement through the local black is black station, employment of peer recruiter to spread the message, the development of flyers in collaboration with local youths, social media advertisement such as Facebook and through internal health promotion programs. During the four-week program peer recruiters, go into community, provide education, promote check-ups, and bring clients in for their young person health check. To keep the young people engaged activities are organised such as sporting activities, boardgames and lunch. Incentives are given at different stages of the check-up- initially a 30-dollar credit given after Triage, Doctors appointment, 715 and STI/BBV screen and pathology has been completed and a deadly choice shirt is given when the young person returns for their results.

Outcomes/Impact:

As a result of the young person check Gurriny has noticed more attendance each year, anecdotal reduction in stigma and shame, the youth have better health literacy and control of their health and has given young people the confidence to talk to their local health care workers. Regarding STI/BBV and the young people, screening, testing, management, and contact tracing has increased.

Another positive spin off from the program is that our peer recruiters have developed skills leading to employment in health care and other professions.

Innovation and Significance:

This project is unique to the Yarrabah community and has made a significant impact on the community through the reduction of STIs and BBVs and the early detection of chronic disease. Furthermore, the program has been fully accepted and encourage by the local community members with both the youth looking forward to it yearly and the parents becoming more involved.

Disclosure of Interest Statement.

We also recognise the need for transparency of disclosure of potential conflicts of interest.