Alcohol and other drug treatment needs among Western Sydney’s CALD communities: Boosting understanding, Enhancing communication, and Supporting change (BES Project)

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Introduction / Issues: Current evidence on alcohol and other drug (AOD) use amongst culturally diverse communities has tended to focus on a particular substance (Lee et al, 2014), or issue (e.g. injecting drug use, Horyniak et al, 2014), or evaluate a particular program (Rowe, 2013, 2014) or treatment stream (VAADA, 2016). This study sought to bridge two gaps: 1) Knowledge about how major CALD communities manage any AOD treatment and support needs across the harm reduction spectrum; 2) Identification of new ways that AOD and other healthcare services can respond to these needs and implement changes.

Method / Approach: Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with community members, community leaders, AOD treatment services and other professionals working with three large communities in Western Sydney: African, Arabic-speaking and Pacific Islander. Questions explored participants’ current knowledge of treatment services, use of harm reduction strategies, where they would or would not consider seeking help and perceived efficacy of services.

Key Findings: Prevention and early intervention were valued, although delayed help seeking remains common. Within-community word of mouth is an important source of information about treatment services during early periods of resettlement.

Discussions and Conclusions: Under-representation of CALD communities in AOD treatment remains an ongoing issue. Systemic approaches can be considered across AOD and other related sectors to increase treatment referral rates, as CALD communities continue to report lack of awareness of treatment options.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:
This study was funded by WentWest Primary Health Network