

## **How do First Nations clients experience outpatient drug and alcohol services in Sydney, Australia? Perspectives from clients of an Inner-City clinic**

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**Introduction:** Outpatient alcohol and other drug (AOD) use programs provide key support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. Such programs are in high demand, with counselling and pharmacotherapy being the most common treatments provided in a non-residential setting for First Nations clients. Global evidence shows that treatment adherence and outcomes are impacted by stigma, clinician and patient relationships and the range of services provided. However, there is limited evidence exploring the lived experience of First Nations clients who access these programs. This qualitative sub-study sought to understand AOD use patterns, treatment motivations and how AOD services can be improved for First Nations clients.

**Methods:** Twenty-four clients of an Inner-City outpatient AOD clinic participated in a qualitative interview with either a Bardi (Aboriginal) researcher or a non-First Nations researcher. Additional inclusion criteria included: identifying as First Nations, be aged at least 16 years and ability to provide informed consent. Interviews were conducted through a flexible and interactive yarning style. Afterwards, thematic analysis was used to develop themes from the interviews.

**Results:** Participants often found treatment inaccessible. Such as travelling long distances, long waitlists, and infrequent mobile services. Further, many participants expressed long-standing racism and discrimination. As such, cultural safety was essential to participants to improve treatment services. Participants also valued their positive, mutually respectful relationships with staff. These findings will be discussed in further detail when presented.

**Discussions:** This data is consistent with broader research, while providing deeper context to the experience of First Nations people utilising outpatient services.

**Implications:** This project fills a much-needed gap in the literature, as well as informing a broader quantitative study program. The program, Clinical Outcomes and Quality Indicators, has established a framework to measure the effectiveness of AOD services. This data will strengthen this framework and add relevance for First Nations clients.

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