

Intergenerational trauma as a determinant of poor sexual health and community engagement as a solution: findings from a NSW Aboriginal community consultation

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Background:

Aboriginal people are a priority population in both the NSW STI Strategy and the NSW HIV Strategy, with targets identified for increasing STI testing and condom use in this population. We identified an evidence gap on best practice approaches to targeted and culturally appropriate sexual health promotion for Aboriginal people in NSW and invested in community consultation to explore attitudes and values in relation to sexual health and sexual healthcare.

Methods:

A community consultation informed by principles of yarning and Dadirri (the cultural practice of deep listening). Consultation interviews were conducted with 29 Aboriginal participants from urban, regional, and remote locations by Aboriginal research consultants.

Results:

Two principal themes were identified. The importance of adopting a wholistic, whole-of-community approach to sexual health promotion for Aboriginal communities was central to responses, including acknowledging the centrality of family and mob to Aboriginal concepts of well-being. Participants also identified a direct link between transmission of intergenerational trauma related to colonisation and the stolen generations and their ability to engage with sexual healthcare safely and comfortably. Participants felt that addressing shame, stigma and trauma within Aboriginal communities was key to achieving positive behaviour change around accessing prevention, testing and treatment on both an individual and community level.

Conclusion:

Findings support investment in whole-of-community 'scaffolding' activities to support sexual health promotion targeted at Aboriginal young people. Intergenerational trauma is identified as a potentially significant sociocultural determinant driving persistent inequities in sexual health outcomes for Aboriginal populations. Future work could improve understandings of links between trauma and disengagement from sexual healthcare to improve accessibility and acceptability of sexual healthcare for Aboriginal people.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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