

## **A tool for equity: drawing upon Aboriginal Health Worker/Practitioner experiences of point-of-care testing in rural and remote South Australia**

### **Authors:**

Riessen J<sup>1</sup>, Betts S<sup>1</sup>, Carroll C<sup>1</sup>, O'Toole E<sup>3</sup>, Riessen D<sup>3</sup>, Ware G<sup>2</sup>, Miller C<sup>2</sup>, Simpson R<sup>4</sup> & Duivesteyn E<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australia, Australia, <sup>2</sup>Yadu Health Aboriginal Corporation, Ceduna, South Australia, Australia, <sup>3</sup>Umoona Tjutagku Health Service Aboriginal Corporation, Coober Pedy, South Australia, Australia, <sup>4</sup>Pika Wiya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation, Port Augusta, South Australia, Australia

**Background:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly in rural and remote communities, are disproportionately affected by sexually transmitted infections (STIs) compared with the non-Aboriginal population. Point-of-care testing (POCT) is an important tool to enhance the timeliness of testing, treatment and prevention of transmission. Aboriginal Health Workers (AHWs) play a vital role in remote primary healthcare settings. This presentation will draw upon the experiences and learnings from AHWs and Practitioners working with POCT in rural and remote health services in South Australia. Further, outline the role of the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia's (AHCSA) Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus (BBV) program in supporting services with POCT.

**Methods:** Using a strength based approach, AHWs were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews and informal conversations from three rural and remote Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) across South Australia. Questions were developed based on the literature and expert knowledge. Participants were selected to include a range of ages, experience and genders.

**Findings:** Emerging themes include the importance of relationships and connectedness, including connection with country and community and the role of multi-disciplinary and intergenerational teams working together to support effective POCT in community. Programs such as the Annual 6-week STI Screening facilitated by AHCSA provide robust examples of the importance of working together to utilise POCT to enhance testing and treatment in rural and remote health services.

**Interpretation:** Drawing upon the learnings of AHWs can provide unique insights into the real-world application and challenges of using POCT in remote healthcare settings. Similarly, examining sexual health programs designed to support AHWs can also provide guidance for better use of POCT. Addressing inequities in sexual health for Aboriginal people in rural and remote communities is important and requires AHWs voices at the centre.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:** The Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia recognise the considerable contribution that the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and Aboriginal community members of South Australia make to professional and research activities. We also recognise the need for transparency of

disclosure of potential conflicts of interest by acknowledging these relationships in publications and presentations.