

“Research in Remote Aboriginal Communities

Paula Binks and George Garambaka Gurruwiwi

Menzies School of Health Research



Acknowledgement of Country

Resourcing and Sustainability

- Extensive community consultation is essential as there are many different stakeholders.
- Budget big, remote community research does not come cheap.
- Multiple approvals required.
- Allow significant time for project commencement.
- Research base/office within the community.
- Accessibility to location (fly or travel by road), availability of accommodation.
- Car hire in community.
- Safety considerations (travelling remote, mobile phone network)
- Transporting study supplies.
- Availability and training of local Community Based Researchers
- Research equipment/ supplies, e.g. centrifuges, POC machines, pathology supplies can be left for the community to use after project completion.



Creating an ethical space

- Recognise significant differences between Aboriginal systems and Western systems and work out ways to overcome them.
- Allowances for cultural, family and community commitments.
- Be flexible with working hours and days.
- Being mindful of kinship relations.
- Following Indigenous research methodologies.
- Two-way learning.
- Research priorities set by Community members.
- Accepting it will be slow.
- Most importantly, building trust and respect.



Capacity building beyond the project

- Having Community Based Researchers complete Cert II in community based research.
- Qualification in blood and other biological specimen collection.
- Community Based Researchers are ready to employ on future projects with an extensive skill set.
- Senior Community Based Researchers can train and mentor new researchers.
- Provide opportunities and support for Community Based Researchers and Aboriginal Health Workforce to attend and present at meetings and conferences.



- “Managing hepatitis B for the Aboriginal Health Workforce”.
- Enables Aboriginal Health workforce to deliver CHB autonomously in their community.
- Some graduates have become facilitators



Principles and practices for success

- Co-design, Participatory Action Research Principles
- Aboriginal team members are essential.
- Commitment in the long term.
- Apply for funding that has a minimum term of 5 years, anything less is not enough.
- Allow sufficient time for the whole project.
- Following the lead of the local Community Based Researcher or Health Worker.
- Encourage Community Based Researchers and Health Workers to feedback results of the research to their communities, clinics and local councils.
- Always provide feedback to communities and individuals; they are keen to know the findings of the study.



What needs work

- Appropriate pay and recognition of the knowledge of the Aboriginal Workforce despite no “recognised” qualifications.
- Ongoing work, casual work sporadic.
- Fear of losing Centrelink payments is a barrier to work.
- Need more opportunities to move into management roles.
- Provide an actual office with computers and internet.
- More opportunities for education in every area.





Acknowledgements

Hep B PAST Partnership investigators and members