Yarn to Quit: The Healing Power of a Good Yarn

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Background:
Smoking remains the leading preventable cause of mortality among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. Tobacco use is inextricably linked to the historical impacts of colonisation, dispossession, and systemic racism. Currently, it represents the largest single preventable risk factor contributing to adverse health outcomes, accounting for approximately 17% of the total disease burden. Clinical guidelines from the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners recommend combining pharmacotherapy with behavioural counselling for individuals seeking to quit smoking. Notably, nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) increases cessation success rates by 50–60%. However, NRT utilisation remains comparatively low among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults (23% versus 42% among non-Indigenous Australians), with barriers including access constraints, and cost.

Description of Model of Care/Intervention:
Quitline provides a free, structured smoking cessation program tailored for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland. The service includes a dedicated team of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counsellors who deliver culturally appropriate support through conversational engagement ("yarning"), free NRT and ongoing guidance throughout the cessation process.

Effectiveness/Acceptability/Implementation:
Program evaluation focuses on measures such as client engagement, quit attempts, cessation outcomes, and user experience among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants. Key implementation factors include the provision of flexible service delivery, the integration of culturally safe practices, and collaboration with local health services to improve accessibility and continuity of care.

Conclusion and Next Steps:
Future priorities include strengthening partnerships with Aboriginal Community Health Services, increased uptake in remote communities and enhancing follow-up and re-engagement strategies to support sustained smoking cessation outcomes.

Implications on communities, practice, policy and/or First Nations communities:
This model underscores the critical importance of culturally appropriate, community-informed approaches in improving health outcomes for First Nations peoples.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:
The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.