

Cultural Synergy in Health: Fostering NAIDOC Health Partnerships for Blood Borne Viruses and Syphilis Screening in Western Sydney

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Introduction: Cultural synergy and community connections improve the organisation of health events, ensuring relevance, accessibility, and impact. They cultivate cultural sensitivity and competency among healthcare providers and organisers, enhancing community engagement and effectiveness. Western Sydney Local Health District's HIV and Related Programs, Storr Liver Centre and Aboriginal Health teams joined forces to offer integrated blood borne viruses (BBV) screening and health promotion activities at Kimberwalli, western Sydney as part of 2023 NAIDOC event.

Methods: The NAIDOC committee organised the Aboriginal health tent, inviting health services to provide education stalls, checkups, workshops, and community gatherings.

The project team offered blood collection for HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and syphilis assisted by a phlebotomist and hepatology nurses. Sexual health education and screening were offered by sexual health nurses and health promotion staff. Engaging activities included spinning wheel quizzes on BBV and promoting awareness of local services.

Results: The project enticed screening for HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and syphilis, along with opportunistic sexual health screening. Sixteen people screened through blood collection, and six had hepatitis C point-of-care tests. About 100 people engaged in health promotion activities, with over 300 BBV resources distributed. The community received referrals to the liver clinic for hepatitis support, sexual health clinic for HIV and STI follow-ups, and cultural support via Aboriginal Health. This outreach opportunity also helped fostering partnerships with local Aboriginal services and facilitated greater engagement for subsequent events post-NAIDOC.

Conclusion: Leveraging community connections allows tailored strategies to expand the reach of health events and activities to broader audiences who do not necessarily participate through traditional channels. It is thus important to have continued collaboration and partnerships with local Aboriginal community and services to ensure that health initiatives are sustainable and address the changing needs of the community by building on community trust.

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