

Effective Public Health Communication: Vaccine Health Messaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Authors : Maria Karidakis, Barbara Kelly

Abstract : The challenges precipitated by the advent of COVID-19 have brought to the fore the task governments and key stakeholders are faced with; ensuring public health communication is readily accessible to vulnerable populations. COVID-19 has presented challenges for the provision and reception of timely, accessible, and accurate health information pertaining to vaccine health messaging to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The aim of this qualitative study was to explore strategies used by Aboriginal-led organisations to improve communication about COVID-19 and vaccination for their communities and to explore how these mediation and outreach strategies were received by community members. We interviewed 6 Aboriginal-led organisations and 15 community members from several states across Australian, and these interviews were analysed thematically. The findings suggest that effective public health communication is enhanced when a First nations-led response defines the governance that happens in First Nations communities. Pro-active and self-determining Aboriginal leadership and decision-making helps drive the response to counter a growing trend towards vaccine hesitancy. Other strategies include establishing partnerships with government departments and relevant non-governmental organisations to ensure services are implemented and culturally appropriate. The outcomes of this research will afford policymakers, stakeholders in healthcare, and cultural mediators the capacity to identify strengths and potential problems associated with pandemic health information and to subsequently implement creative and culturally specific solutions that go beyond the provision of written documentation via translation or interpreting. It will also enable governing bodies to adjust multilingual policies and to adopt mediation strategies that will improve information delivery and intercultural services on a national and international level.

Keywords : intercultural communication, qualitative, public health communication, COVID-19, pandemic, mediated communication, first nations people

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