



EDCAN FACT SHEET – OCTOBER 2007

DEVELOPMENT OF CANCER EDUCATION RESOURCES – SCOPING THE RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Background

The aim of EdCaN, a Cancer Australia funded project, is to develop a national workforce framework for cancer nursing which will assist in preparing nurses to provide care for people affected by cancer now and in the future. In developing a national approach to cancer nursing, the project must consider the large diversity of needs throughout Australia including the specific issues faced by Australia's diverse indigenous community in relation to cancer

Aim

A scoping study was established with the aims of investigating:

- The cancer education resource requirements for clinicians working with people affected by cancer in indigenous communities and who would be the best point of focus for these resources.
- The feasibility of material developed by EdCaN to be translated into resources that can be applied to the indigenous setting.
- The programs already in place to support Indigenous Health Workers (IHWs) in relation to cancer care.
- How EdCaN could provide education support for IHWs working with people affected by cancer in indigenous communities.

Method

A program of face to face consultations with representatives working in the area of indigenous health was initiated. Information was also gathered through attendance at conferences and email communication through the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet List Server.

Discussion with representatives from organisations such as the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO), the Department of Human Services (Victoria) Improving Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Patients (ICAP) program, Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit, coordinators of various state Cancer Council's Indigenous Programs, Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA), Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services, Hetti Perkins Home for the Aged (Alice Springs), Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses (CATSIN), the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Forum and various health professionals working within indigenous communities.

Relevant Key Findings

- There is strong interest from all health workers within the indigenous health sector for cancer information and educational resources. The IHW's in particular receive no cancer specific training components under the current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) Primary Health Care Qualification.

- IHWs tend to be overloaded, under resourced and in many cases, may not have the time to take on extra responsibilities or attend training. Thus IHW's might be best served by information or brief education packages that can support them practically in their work and practical resources, tools and information that can be used within the communities (flip charts, DVD's posters etc). IHW's also need to have knowledge of what is available and how to access services such as the Cancer Support Services.
- There is a need for cultural awareness and cultural safety training for non-indigenous health workers. These health professionals also need practical information such as:
 - knowledge of aboriginal service systems,
 - what IHW's do and how to work with them,
 - building relationships with aboriginal clients,
 - how to work within indigenous communities.
- Production of nationally appropriate resources can be problematic due to differences in cultural practices within the various indigenous communities. The need for cultural relevance also means that resources developed for non-indigenous education programs may not be seen as 'relevant' to the indigenous context. Therefore it is an imperative that any resource development is done in close collaboration with representatives of the indigenous communities.
- Currently two major Cancer Awareness programs also exist specifically targeting IHWs;
 - The NSW Cancer Council's training resource for ATSI Health Workers, developed to facilitate training workshops in the causes, treatment and support of Aboriginal people with cancer; it is currently being developed into a 3-day certificate course for Aboriginal Health Workers in NSW.
 - The QLD Cancer Council's Cancer Care Course for ATSI Health Workers, a fully funded 5 day course to provide education, skills training and information about cancer and Qld cancer support networks.
- The majority of indigenous specific resources have been developed from the Breast and Cervical Screening programs. These programs often provide training resources to Health Workers and related health services, along with health promotion and educational resources for ATSI women (brochures, posters, DVDs etc.). There are also some resources available for men's issues such as prostate cancer, but these programs are much more limited.

Implications

Educational programs are required to teach cultural awareness to non-indigenous health workers. Such programs are needed to enable these health professionals to work effectively with IHWs and to work directly with indigenous people affected by cancer. By working in coordination with indigenous representatives to produce a case study centred around an indigenous patient with cancer EdCaN resources would help to bring cultural issues into mainstream education programs, whilst also creating a case study that would be found culturally relevant to indigenous health workers and their communities.

Indigenous specific programs are also required to raise IHWs awareness of cancer and how they can support indigenous people with cancer, along with resources to aid in the provision of Health Promotion and Cancer Awareness programs within their communities.

Also, as a number of cancer awareness / education programs have or are being developed through various agencies and organisations, EdCaN may be best placed to help further develop or disseminate these programs. These findings highlight the importance of including an indigenous specific component into the cancer nursing education framework.