

Aboriginal peoples' experiences with a mainstream healthy eating and physical activity program

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Presentation outline

- Project, rationale, location/ context, aims & methods
- Best Practice Principles
- Achievements to date
- Challenges and successes
- Concluding thoughts

Rationale

- Few examples obesity prevention programs conducted with Indigenous & different cultural groups worldwide (Caballero et al 2003; Obarzanek & Pratt 2003)
- High levels of overweight & obesity in Australian Aboriginal people (Pink & Allbon 2008)
- Experiences as a dietitian in rural/ remote South Australia

Location/ context



Community Programs

- 2 communities: Morphett Vale, Murray Bridge
- “Indigenous agencies” a target of *ewba* but not a primary aim

Implemented by Southern Primary Health of Southern Adelaide Health Service and Murray Mallee Community Health Service of Country Health SA



inspiring achievement

Components of methodology

- Give Aboriginal people a voice
- Input of Aboriginal people into the project – design, data collection, analysis
- Respect timelines & cultural boundaries
- Utilise existing community structures
- Ask questions
- Maintain a non-threatening presence in community
- Provide in-kind support based on community-identified need

Aims/ methods

Aim	Method
1. Use a suitable approach & involve Aboriginal people in the research	Consultation, discussion, project mentors, cultural facilitator, working together, asking questions
2. Explore experiences of Aboriginal children & families with <i>ewba</i>	Interviews using visual tool. Recruitment through existing programs. Aboriginal person present.
3. Explore experiences of Aboriginal stakeholders involved with <i>ewba</i>	Interviews with key Aboriginal workers
4. Explore experiences of <i>ewba</i> workers working with the Aboriginal community	Interviews with <i>ewba</i> Project Coordinators
5. Explore experiences of Aboriginal students involved in <i>ewba</i> quantitative evaluation	Interviews with Aboriginal students involved in this process late 2009. Interviews with school staff
6. Describe key outcomes in Aboriginal students from <i>ewba</i> surveys & measures	<i>ewba</i> data: nutrition & physical activity surveys & measures from 2006 (baseline) & 2009 (follow-up)

Best Practice Principles

- Guiding questions used as framework when designing interview questions
- Ask: did *ewba* meet these principles when working with the Aboriginal community?
 - Not all will be relevant

Examples

CO-OPS Principle	CO-OPS Guiding Question (King & Gill 2009)	Modified question to ask in PhD project
C2: Community Analysis	Size/ social characteristics/ of target population/ potential implementation settings	What characteristics of the 2 Aboriginal communities were described by <i>ewba</i> & how were these used?
P3: Planning Context	Does the project form part of a portfolio of actions with similar goals to be implemented within the same community?	What other actions around healthy eating/ physical activity have occurred within the two communities, has <i>ewba</i> utilised these connections and does <i>ewba</i> reinforce these programs?
I2: Quality implementation & monitoring	Is there a plan to identify steps and time- frames, a system for monitoring & documenting variations, managing ongoing partnerships	Were timeframes considered in the context of the Aboriginal community, was this community worked with differently and was this documented, were relationships built during consultation maintained?

Achievements

Timeframe	Purpose	Other actions
Jul-Dec 08	Identify/ liaise with key organisations, identify key people & processes for consultation in 2 communities	N/A
Jan-Jun 09	Build trust & working relationships (community & mentors), attend community events	Provide nutrition/ project planning support to numerous groups & research support to CF
Jul-Sept 09	Community consultation, planning for data collection with Cultural Facilitator (CF)	
Nov 09 – Mid 2010	Data collection	
Mid-late 2010	Data analysis & interpretation, assisted by mentors & CF	Consider how this could continue once I have finished

Challenges

- Changes in my thinking & impact on my project
- Personal challenges – my role as a white researcher
- Building trust
- Demonstrating a commitment – “showing I am serious”
- The role of history & past experience – colonisation is still a very real event
- Listening to stories
- Identifying & contacting people/ groups
- Finding a key person & nurturing that relationship
- Being consistent – present at community events even when I “may have something better to do” – reality is that *is* the best thing you can do
- Feeling in the minority
- Mismatch of expectations & how to deal with this
- Logistical issues in the two different communities

Successes

- Show I am serious by doing
 - Cultural Facilitator, Women's Group x 2, Kids Café
- Ask questions, no assumptions
- Receive invitations to community events & requests for support
- Indirect approach – allow time for character judgment
- Flexible approach – new, more relevant questions emerge
- Be guided by community

Conclusions

- Important, challenging, rewarding
- Healthy eating & physical activity – only one aspect of people's lives
- Not all Aboriginal people are the same
- Remember we look through lenses
- Be an advocate and ask questions

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References

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