

# Getting QUM messages on COPD into remote Aboriginal Health services: how OPRAH did it?

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## Objective

Chronic disease is a major burden for all Australians, but the heaviest of this burden falls on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly those living in remote communities across Australia. Quality use of medicines (QUM) education will optimise both the treatment and prevention of chronic disease and therefore assist in 'closing the gap'. There are many barriers to getting QUM education to staff at these remote centres; the Outreach Pharmacists in Remote Aboriginal Health services (OPRAH) project aims to overcome some of these by embedding tailored QUM education into the existing networks of pharmacy services.

## Method

We engaged with pharmacists working with remote Aboriginal health services, and using a train-the-trainer model, provided upskilling on medicines use in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) as well as cultural awareness and communication skills required for optimal delivery.

This model explored potential barriers to QUM specifically those linked to the remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health environment, and ways to overcome these.

The workshops were tailored to train the pharmacists to meet the differing needs of the front-line health professionals; largely the Remote Area Nurses (RAN) and Aboriginal Health Workers (AHW).

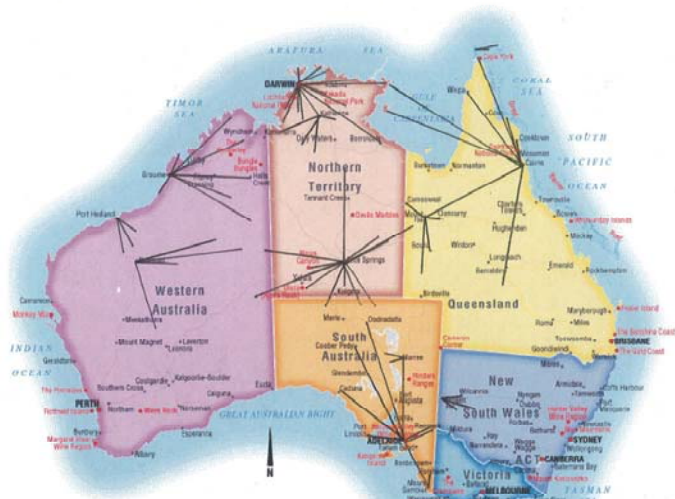
## Results

29 Outreach pharmacists were trained between March and April 2009. Evaluation of training revealed that:

- 94% improved their confidence in delivery of information on COPD
- 88% improved their confidence in overcoming communication barriers.

Educational sessions were delivered at 33 remote health services to 106 health professionals including 38 AHWs and 52 RANs between April and December 2009. Pharmacists qualitative feedback on their visits found:

- the use of placebo devices provided hands on practical application of the information
- graphical and pictorial resources to represent information engaged the staff and supported learning.
- cognitive dissonance to the anti-smoking message was difficult to overcome with many staff at health services being smokers.



Reach of the OPRAH program

The lines on the map above represent the outreach pharmacists who participated in this training and the health services that they visit.

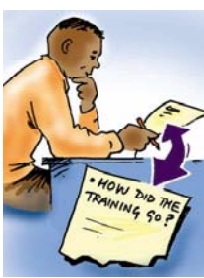
Training sites for this topic were Perth, Alice Springs, and Brisbane

## Conclusion

Through education, these essential front-line staff are being updated on best practice in management of COPD and empowered to recognise patients who may benefit from increased support and counselling to improve their own health outcomes. Relationships are also fostered through repeated pharmacist visits for regular service delivery and ongoing program topics. Further QUM education will be delivered on stroke prevention and pain management using the OPRAH model.

## Key messages

- Distance barriers and staff shortages can be overcome by integrating training into existing models of service delivery
- Tailored education is key to 'closing the gap' via improved health literacy and quality use of medicines.



An independent, not-for-profit organisation for quality use of medicines, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing