

» RURAL PHARMACY

ATSI guidelines out soon

New PSA Guidelines for Provision of Pharmacy Services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are soon to be released. These guidelines, funded by the Department of Health, will assist pharmacists to be culturally responsive and encourage increased engagement with Aboriginal health services, key Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

The Guidelines are for pharmacists working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in urban, rural and remote settings and contain specific sections for community, hospital and consultant pharmacists. The Guidelines include information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, culture and medication issues. They outline the roles of Aboriginal Health Services and Aboriginal Health Workers, and give practical tips on building relationships with communities, even including community visit checklists.

Guidelines Author, Lindy Swain said: 'I wanted to make these guidelines as practical as possible. I hope they are useful for both pharmacists who are new to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and, for pharmacists who are well experienced working in this sector. I hope universities will use these them to teach more culturally responsive practice to pharmacy students.'

The guidelines encourage pharmacists to self-reflect on their own cultural responsiveness, as well as that of their staff. Lindy commented that 'many pharmacists have no training in this area, so we have included information that will assist pharmacists to evaluate their practice and the cultural safety of their pharmacies. Many pharmacists may be unaware that their pharmacies may

not be very welcoming to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.'

In recent times there has been some debate about the usefulness of online cultural awareness training packages. Cultural awareness training is only the first step to developing some cultural sensitivity and understanding. Local culture must be taught and learnt at a local level. A cultural orientation checklist, outlining questions pharmacists need to ask to learn more about the local culture of their area, is included.

The Guidelines for Provision of Pharmacy Services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people include a comprehensive section on communication, patient counselling, assisting medication adherence and suggestions for medication labelling.

'Much of the input came from the key stakeholder group. They were essential to the process', Ms Swain said. 'They were a fantastic group, so passionate and keen to contribute. They were very generous with their time.'

The key stakeholder group included representatives from Indigenous Allied Health Australia, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, Medicare Local, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, The Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Society of Hospital Pharmacists of

Australia, Rural Pharmacy Support Network and the Department of Health. Some pharmacists who work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were also important members of the key stakeholder group.

The key stakeholder group members attended two teleconferences and a face to face meeting, as well as giving feedback via email and phone. For a number of pharmacists travelling from their remote locations it took 3 days to attend the one day meeting. After significant input from the key stakeholders, the draft guidelines were sent to a broader stakeholder group for final feedback, before completion. Stakeholders included organisations and individuals involved in pharmacy and/or Aboriginal Health, and included a number Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.

Surrounding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific pharmacy programs, such as Section 100, QUMAX and Close the Gap, are numerous rules. These new guidelines include an overview of all programs and hyperlinks for where more information can be obtained. There is also information about the Coordinated Care and Supplementary Services program through which some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can access subsidised pharmacy services and medical devices. An extensive resource list is included, which will assist pharmacists to find more information and access appropriate patient resources.

PSA is keen to assist pharmacists learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and deliver a consistently high stand of service to Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander people. PSA is planning to develop some Aboriginal health educational webinars which will be available soon. For any enquiries about Provision of Pharmacy Services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people please contact Lindy Swain at lindy.swain@psa.org.au or on 02 6620 7389.