

Action Research in Action within an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation

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ABSTRACT

The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) is undertaking a three year action research project titled *Goreen Narrkwarren Ngrn-toura - Healthy Family Air. Reducing smoking amongst pregnant Aboriginal women in Victoria: an holistic approach*. Tobacco smoking in pregnancy is one of the few potentially preventable causes of complications in pregnancy, low birth weight and preterm birth and that rates of smoking in pregnancy remain significantly higher amongst Aboriginal pregnant women in Victoria compared with non-Aboriginal women. VACCHO represents the collective of 24 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) around Victoria and is well placed to facilitate such a project.

The project involves Aboriginal people in all areas of the research including as participants, researchers, advisors and project team members. Aboriginal people participate to direct the research processes and the ways in which the research will benefit Aboriginal people and communities in Victoria. That is, Aboriginal people are not in this case purely 'subjects' of research or designated in the position of 'other'. Non-Indigenous people work alongside Aboriginal people in this project.

A goal in this project is to create more supportive environments for the cessation smoking. This includes the environments within ACCHOs. The presenters of this session will demonstrate in their presentation how they engaged with people in developing a smoking policy within an Aboriginal community-controlled health organisation. They will explain how they worked with staff in defining the problems, situations, issues and then involved the group in the process of working on answers to questions, solutions to issues and towards a process of change. This participatory model of working will be utilised in other organisations. The presentation will highlight how research can be empowering to and for Aboriginal peoples and how action research methods can be borrowed from and adapted to fit within an Aboriginal context to bring about change.