Health in Motion

A Mobile Health and Education Clinic supplementing healthcare and health education in rural and remote Western Australia

A journey to improving health:
- Health and Veterinary Services Delivery
- Health Education
- Training and Workforce Development
- Role models and networking

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Remote communities in the Pilbara

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned photographs in this brochure may contain images of deceased persons which may cause sadness or distress.

The Pilbara is the powerhouse of Western Australia’s economy. Despite this, the level of chronic disease amongst Aboriginal people in the Pilbara is too high and the health of Aboriginal people in the Pilbara compares unfavourably with that of the general population.

Aboriginal morbidity and mortality statistics for the Pilbara broadly reflect those of Aboriginal people across the State, although the region has a significantly higher mortality rate for mental health and alcohol related conditions.

- 65 per cent of Aboriginal people have at least one long-term health condition
- 27 per cent of Aboriginal children have one or more long-term health condition.
- Hospitalisation rates for Aboriginal people in the Pilbara are higher than those of Aboriginal people across the whole of the State’s rural and remote regions, pointing to a greater impact upon quality of life generally.

This tells us that there is scope for improvement in preventative care that targets early identification and better management of conditions.

Factors influencing health status include:
- level of disadvantage experienced in communities;
- level of remoteness;
- childhood development,
- lifestyle behaviours,
- access to housing and transport, and
- climate.

The demographic factors of remoteness (isolation) and socio-economic disadvantage of the Pilbara Aboriginal population contribute to the significantly greater burden of disease compared to non-Aboriginal people.
Aboriginal health in Aboriginal hands

Murdoch University has developed a project to work in partnership with the local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services based in the Pilbara so that together Aboriginal Health is put into Aboriginal Hands.

To help achieve this aim we plan to establish and develop a supplementary human health and veterinary care service called ‘Health in Motion’.

The objectives of Health in Motion are:

- to provide accessible, culturally appropriate, comprehensive and holistic primary health care services and health education for Aboriginal peoples from this region.
- to train final year health and veterinary students in delivering remote and regional services and work in Aboriginal health.
- to build capacity and aspirations in remote communities by providing workforce development and networking and role modelling opportunities.

Our project team will achieve this by working in partnership with Wirraka Maya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation, Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service (PAMS) and the Pilbara Education Regional Office.

“Each and every Australian has the right to equal access to health, income, employment, education, and the chance to live a meaningful and positive life.”

Associate Professor Bruce Walker
Associate Dean of Research, School of Health Professions, Murdoch University

The principal of Health in Motion is: nothing about us without us
A key aim of Health in Motion is to improve the health status of Aboriginal people living in the Pilbara. We will achieve this through self-determination and having Aboriginal people manage and participate in the project. We will add to the development of important services and programs that will improve the health and quality of life for all Aboriginal people in the communities we visit.

To achieve this, we will employ a project team comprised of Aboriginal people who will be based in the Pilbara to run the project with support from Murdoch University. We will also have a representative Council of Elders for the project.

After a long consultation period and endorsement from the Boards of Wirraka Maya and PAMS, a Letter of Intent between Wirraka Maya and Murdoch and PAMS and Murdoch has been signed to achieve these essential partnerships.
More than 90% of people surveyed supported the concept of a mobile health clinic delivering services on country.

Background: two-year health and education needs analysis

In 2011 and 2012, a team of four researchers from our School of Health Professions and School of Education led by Associate Professor Bruce Walker carried out a two-year health and education needs analysis of Aboriginal people in the Pilbara. There was a special emphasis on Gumala Aboriginal Corporation members and the research study was sponsored by Gumala Aboriginal Corporation and Rio Tinto.

The team trained and contracted Aboriginal people from the Pilbara to interview hundreds of local Aboriginal community members and families. People were asked what they believed was lacking in health and education and what they thought were the best solutions.

The research team also conducted a comprehensive literature review and surveyed local health and education service providers.

The study showed that children and their families who live in the Pilbara region of Western Australia are not receiving the health care they need.
Health in Motion has four key pillars that are underpinned by rigorous action research of this model.

The project will assist with the self-determination of individuals and communities and helping to improve their own social, cultural and physical well-being in the ways that they identify.
We will employ four Aboriginal people who will be based in the Pilbara to manage this project. The positions will be a full-time Project Manager and Project Officer and two truck drivers.

The capital equipment comprises a prime mover truck and a fully-equipped B-double semi-trailer custom-fitted with accommodation (front trailer) and a mobile health and education unit (rear trailer). The front trailer has accommodation to sleep eight students and the rear trailer has accommodation to sleep two supervisors.

The truck will be supported by three Troop Carriers which will be able to transport students, supervisors and supplies. Each Troop Carrier will have a camper trailer for additional accommodation for additional people such as staff from relevant non-government organisations.

Each fortnight, eight senior university health or veterinary students will fly to either South Hedland or Newman. They will join the truck to deliver medical services to remote communities in the Pilbara region of Western Australia under the supervision of experienced professionals, and in partnership with Aboriginal Health Workers from Wirraka Maya and PAMS.
The range of services that can be delivered by Murdoch University students are multi-disciplinary and include:

- Nursing
- Counselling
- Chiropractic
- Psychology
- Exercise Science
- Veterinary Science

We are in discussions with other Western Australia universities regarding participation of students and supervisors to provide other health services, including:

- General practice
- Dentistry
- Audiology
- Optometry and
- Podiatry
- Physiotherapy Occupational Therapy

Importantly, the project budget includes funding for a dentist and GP in the event that students and supervisors are not available from other universities to deliver these services.

We will ensure that primary health care, such as nursing or general medicine, will be a constant service that students and their supervisors provide. Alternatively, we will contract a paid professional.

Medical facilities in the custom-built clinic include:

- Digital imaging x-ray
- Pathology
- Examination and treatment beds
- Dedicated dental chair
- Consultation rooms
- Telehealth facilities – high speed satellite internet connections allowing audio and video connectivity to health professionals
- An outdoor classroom under an awning with audio-visual facilities.
The Health in Motion circuit will regularly travel to eight communities - six remote communities and the towns of South Hedland and Newman (the ‘bookends’).

The communities are:
- Onslow
- Karratha
- Roebourne
- South Hedland
- Marble Bar
- Nullagine
- Jigalong
- Newman
- Youngaleena (Bunjima)
- Wakathuni
- Bellary Springs (Innawonga)
- Tom Price
- Paraburdoo

Where will it go

The truck will travel in a continuous loop from February to November each year. For the months of December and January the truck will be serviced and the mobile health trailers will be parked at either Wirraka Maya or PAMS and available for their staff to use.

This will enable us to complete up to 20 circuits each year. In brief, each community will be visited around every two to three weeks.

We have prepared a detailed schedule, with the customised trailers built in 2017 and the project to commence in 2018. The project manager and coordinator will be appointed in 2017 so they have 12 months to plan, promote the project and build strong relationships with the communities.

As it is mobile, the mobile health unit will travel to events such as football carnivals, NAIDOC Week celebrations, and Lore time with permission from Elders. It could also be deployed for large-scale emergencies so that people could be treated immediately.
Benefits

The benefits to Aboriginal people, in particular people who are living in or visiting the communities on the circuit are listed below:

Health Services Delivery
- Free health checks, assessments, treatments and plans delivered in partnership Wirraka Maya and PAMs
- Free dental examinations and treatments
- Free chiropractic treatments
- Free counselling exercises (e.g. play therapy for kids) and sessions
- Free psychology sessions
- Free veterinary services including flea treatments, sterilisations, and training sessions on animal care
- Employing Aboriginal people to manage the project in the Pilbara
- Regular access to this suite of services
Health Education
Health Education topics for schools and community groups (including individuals and families). Topics include:

- First aid
- Better eating and exercise
- Children’s health
- Hygiene
- Pregnancy and maternal health
- Wound care to prevent infections
- Animal care
- Eye and ear health
- Risk factors in diabetes, heart disease, smoking
- Hydration
- Sexual health
- The safe household
- Travelling safe
- Substance use
- Violent behaviour
- Mental health
- Parenting tips

Training and workforce development

- University students will gain a better understanding of issues facing remote communities and Aboriginal health
- They will get real-world experience and training in how to deliver services in a culturally appropriate way
- Aboriginal Health Workers increase skills by participating in health education sessions on wound treatment and other topics
- Information on pathways to post-school options (e.g., K-Track and K-Track Health offered by Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre. For more information, go to the Kulbardi website: www.murdoch.edu.au/Kulbardi/)

Networking and Role Modelling

- Aboriginal Health Workers and project staff will be role models to remote school students and community members
- Opportunities for other role models will exist
- Networking opportunities with Government and Industry
Partnerships needed

We are committed to getting this project up and running as a commitment to the region.

We are currently seeking project and funding partners for Health in Motion.

A clear need exists to expand existing primary health care services, deliver self-maintaining health programs and provide early identification of and intervention in health conditions. The distribution of a relatively small population over a vast area in the Pilbara calls for a flexible approach to the delivery of healthcare.

Health in Motion can help make a positive difference to these remote communities.

The integral elements of such an approach are:

• A collaborative approach in partnership with Wirraka Maya and PAMS
• A focus on preventative healthcare and health promotion
• Delivery of multiple health services to specified remote areas on a regular basis
• The use of tele-health services to interconnect Pilbara health services with each other and with Perth
• Flexibility
• No need for capital buildings and the associated costs in each remote community

Finally, this project will be monitored with first class research and constant improvements to the roll out will occur over the first four years of service. Once developed the Mobile Health Unit will be scalable and available for other remote areas.
Further information:

If you would like to discuss this project or receive a copy of the full business case, the Project Director would welcome your enquiries.

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