

The Journey of Living with diabetes: A description and evaluation of a customised health education program for Noongar people in Western Australia

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This study investigated the development and impact of the Journey of Living with Diabetes (JLWD) program for Aboriginal people residing in the South Metropolitan area of Perth, Western Australia.

AIM

The study explored the program's role in facilitating diabetes self-management in Aboriginal communities, thus hopefully providing evidence to ensure sustainability of the initiative in the region.

METHODS

A pre-test post-test study design, including both quantitative and qualitative methodologies was used. Three data collection points were defined at commencement of the program (pre-test), at completion of the program (post-test), and at 6 months post commencement of the program (follow up), in order to ascertain whether behaviour change had occurred and was maintained. Data on the participants' personal stories and perception of the program were collected at program completion using yarning methodology and notes were recorded by the author to capture the Aboriginal facilitators' experiences with delivering the program.

RESULTS

A total of 55 Aboriginal people undertaking the JLWD program completed the pre-test and post-test questionnaires, of whom 28 had diabetes and 27 were relatives or friends. The baseline data confirmed the adverse health status and high risk factor profile of Aboriginal people. There was only limited healthy lifestyle behaviour, self-management practices, and ability and confidence to make healthy lifestyle changes at baseline. Although there was insufficient data to assess statistically the impact of the program among participants who completed the program, understanding and confidence to make healthy lifestyle changes improved. Among the diabetic cohort, diabetes self management, particularly in relation to blood glucose monitoring and recording, daily foot checks, taking medication and overall confidence in managing diabetes, improved. Furthermore, the participants reported the program was beneficial and culturally appropriate.

CONCLUSION

Culturally sensitive health programs like the JLWD program are likely to improve diabetes self-management practices and promote healthy lifestyle behaviours among Aboriginal people.

