

Supporting information and communication needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and their health providers about influenza vaccination

NCIRS Social Science in Immunisation team is conducting a study on how to support information and communication needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and health service providers involved in coordination, promotion or delivery of influenza vaccinations to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across New South Wales, about influenza and influenza vaccination.

This summary presents key findings and recommendations from phase 1 of the study, in which we spoke with providers and coordinators.

Participants discussed issues relevant to patient-provider communication and information sharing about influenza vaccination. NCIRS has formulated several recommendations informed by study findings:

Findings	Recommendations
1. Opportunities to promote and deliver influenza vaccination in some mainstream health services may be missed due to providers' misperceptions about the risk posed by influenza to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.	NCIRS recommends developing a succinct, culturally responsive two-page resource for mainstream providers, with information on influenza risks and influenza vaccination for Aboriginal families. This resource should be piloted and refined before being circulated widely. This resource could be updated each year before the influenza season and made available to health service providers online and during training/webinars (providing opportunity for health providers to adapt it into a localised resource).
2. Opportunities to promote and deliver influenza vaccination in some mainstream health services may be missed due to providers not asking people about their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, not offering vaccination opportunistically (at any health check), not offering vaccination to the whole family, a lack of skills to have a supportive, culturally appropriate vaccination conversation, and lack of strong recommendation to vaccinate.	NCIRS recommends developing a conversation guide for mainstream providers to improve their skills and confidence in identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, having supportive and family-centred conversations about influenza vaccination and recommending influenza vaccination to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

¹“Supporting communication needs of communities and health providers to increase influenza vaccination in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities” Study, led by NCIRS Social Science team Kasia Bolsewicz, Maryke Steffens, Bianca Bullivant and Frank Beard, together with the National Indigenous Immunisation Coordinator Katrina Clark and Aboriginal Population Health Trainee Larissa Karpish.

<p>3. There may be a level of misperception about influenza/influenza vaccination among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.</p>	<p>NCIRS recommends consulting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families on ways to improve understanding of influenza/influenza vaccination.</p> <p>In phase 2 of the study, NCIRS team will consult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families on ways in which they would like information about influenza and influenza vaccination to be shared in the community and by their doctor or immunisation nurse.</p>
<p>4. Available influenza vaccination resources are not accepted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.</p>	<p>NCIRS recommends improving the appropriateness of influenza vaccination resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.</p> <p>Participants shared some guiding principles on how resources could be improved; however, further consultations with families to capture their own perspectives are needed.</p> <p>In phase 2 of the study, NCIRS team will ask Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to comment and expand on these principles.</p>

Participants also discussed broader systemic, social and cultural issues influencing influenza vaccination promotion to and uptake by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and opportunities for improvement. Many of these complex issues have been discussed in literature and policies, and, as they do not offer easy solutions, continue to require careful consideration.

Opportunities to improve vaccination uptake, highlighted by study participants, include:

1. Improve clarity and consistency of government information given to providers about influenza vaccination.
2. Improve communication and engagement between government stakeholders and Aboriginal Medical Services around influenza vaccination.
3. Improve cultural safety of mainstream health services (beyond patient-provider communication).
4. Improve access to immunisation services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families (which contributes to improving cultural safety of services).

In the next phase of the study, as COVID-19 situation permits, we plan to speak with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to hear their perspectives.

If you would like to access a copy of the full report of Phase 1 of this study, please contact Dr Kasia Bolsewicz at Katarzyna.Bolsewicz@health.nsw.gov.au.