

Evaluation of a suicide prevention training resource for Central Australian Indigenous communities

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Jess Lopes is currently completing a Bachelor of Health Science Honours degree through Flinders University. Her thesis focused on an evaluation of a suicide prevention training resource for use in central Australian Indigenous communities. She recently started work as a Research Associate at the Centre for Remote Health in Alice Springs.

Aim

The DVD “Suicide Story” was developed by the Life Promotion Program (LPP) of the Mental Health Association of Central Australia to provide a localised suicide prevention training resource for Indigenous communities. The LPP team established a partnership with the Centre for Remote Health in Alice Springs to undertake an evaluation of the training resource. The aim was to investigate the effectiveness and usability of the DVD in order to provide feedback for further improvements, assist with future distribution, and inform the development of the Train the Trainer workshops and a training manual.

Method

The training resource was evaluated using a qualitative methodology with a triangulated approach, which included; direct observations, focus groups and semi – structured interviews. The researcher accompanied LPP staff to observe the implementation of the DVD during two trial suicide prevention workshops. Focus groups and semi structured interviews collected feedback from workshop participants regarding the effectiveness and usability of the resource. Indigenous researchers and interpreters were also available to assist with data collection, when necessary.

Relevance

There is recognition of the heterogeneous nature of Aboriginal groups and communities within Australia, and the need for suicide prevention initiatives to be designed specifically to suit individual regions and communities. In addition, programs that are developed at a community level appear to be more informed, more applicable, and ultimately more effective.

The literature suggests there are currently limited suicide prevention training programs that include meaningful and effective education resources for Indigenous Australians, particularly those that have been evaluated. As such, it was essential to evaluate the “Suicide Story” resource to validate the time, energy and funds spent on its development and to ensure that no further harm is done through the use of ineffective or inappropriate education tools. The lessons gained from the study will strengthen the community’s knowledge of how to effectively prevent suicide within Indigenous contexts.

Results

The results of the study suggested that the DVD increased trainees’ knowledge and confidence to respond to someone at risk of suicide. Key to the success of the training resource was a strong and strategic approach to implementation, which included delivering the DVD within a suicide prevention workshop and employing local cultural consultants and Indigenous implementers.

Recommendation and conclusion

The overall recommendation of the evaluation study was that the “Suicide Story” training resource is delivered within the context of a well facilitated suicide prevention workshop, including support and involvement of local cultural consultants and Indigenous implementers.