

Indigenous Australia Program DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

EYE HEALTH WEB RESOURCES

The Fred Hollows Foundation (The Foundation) Indigenous Australia Program (IAP) and the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet (HealthInfoNet) at Edith Cowan University are working together to develop a suite of knowledge exchange and translation products that provide succinct, up-to-date, and accessible evidence relating to eye health among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. This collaborative project is an example of effective knowledge exchange and translation, as it brought together researchers, NGOs, and beneficiaries to exchange evidence, expertise, and ideas which resulted in the development of accessible resources being made available to practitioners through an eye health web resource. The eye health resources have been designed to inform practice among primary healthcare providers caring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with diabetes and other eye health conditions, and to support health education and in turn increase general community understanding about diabetic retinopathy and eye health.

Eye health web resource

An eye health web resource was developed and added to the HealthInfoNet website between mid-2011 and mid-2014, with funding from the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH). Since mid-2014, the HealthInfoNet has had only limited funding to maintain the web resource. In 2016 IAP funded the HealthInfoNet to expand content on the existing eye health web resource, facilitate knowledge exchange to assist the eye health workforce, and to promote the updated and expanded web resource.

The resource has been expanded to better meet the information needs of people who are working, studying or interested in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health. The resource includes an:

- Eye Health Section – a collection of information and updated resources: www.eyehhealth.org.au
- Eye Health Workforce Portal - a selection of information for the workforce: www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/other-health-conditions/eyeworkers
- Eye health yarning place - a free online network to help people share information, knowledge and experiences <http://www.yarning.org.au/group/12>
- Eye Health Twitter account www.twitter.com/aiheye

“THE HEALTH/INFONET EYE HEALTH WEB RESOURCE MAKES BOTH ACCESSING AND SHARING INFORMATION SO MUCH EASIER. HAVING THE CONFIDENCE TO KNOW WE ARE USING THE LATEST AVAILABLE EVIDENCE ON WHICH TO BASE OUR PROJECTS IS REALLY VALUABLE.”

Jaki Adams-Barton, Manager of the Indigenous Australia Program at The Fred Hollows Foundation

Key achievements

The collaboration has allowed The Foundation to work together with the Health/InfoNet to share skills and knowledge, and provide up-to-date information on eye health more broadly to the eye health sector and those with an interest in the area. Some of the tasks so far have included:

- Delivery of three training workshops across Australia to educate health professionals on how to navigate and utilise the eye health workforce portal and resources.
- Brochures developed to promote the updated and expanded eye health web resource, and supplied at eye health training workshops and conferences and selected health services.
- Development of a Health/InfoByte – short video providing information about key features of the eye health web resources: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wNcO-GDNsS>
- A new up-to-date diabetic retinopathy (DR) factsheet developed for use by eye health practitioners and available as a PDF to download: www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/docs/dr-key-facts.pdf
- An online news feature developed to keep health professionals updated with current eye health news: www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/other-health-conditions/eye/news
- Monthly electronic newsletters developed and emailed to subscribers: www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/key-resources/newsletters#eye_health
- Regular dissemination of information (tweets) via eye health Twitter account: www.twitter.com/aiheye
- Ongoing development of an eye health yarning place – an online network to help people across Australia share their eye health experience and information: <http://www.yarning.org.au/group/12>
- Delivery of a Health/InfoNet Café at the National Rural Health Conference in Cairns in April 2017 promoting eye health and the updated web portal and resources.

Eye health Key facts Information for health care providers to assist their everyday practice

Diabetic retinopathy among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Diabetic retinopathy (DR) is a serious eye problem that can develop in people with diabetes and can lead to vision loss and blindness. It can damage the eye before people know they have diabetes or experience any problems with their vision.

The good news is:

- Up to 98% of severe vision loss and blindness from DR can be prevented if people receive recommended eye checks and treatment.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with diabetes are now more likely to receive yearly eye checks than in the past and are less likely to experience vision loss due to DR.

But despite signs of progress:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are still at greater risk of developing diabetes and DR than non-Indigenous people.
- For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with diabetes, only half still have received their last yearly eye check for DR, and a quarter will never have had one.

Now it is important that:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are supported to manage their diabetes and get yearly eye checks so that DR is detected early.
- Yearly eye checks include a medical history, vision test, retinal examination, and referral if specialist eye care is needed.
- People with DR are given information about eye care pathways and are supported to seek specialist treatment at the right time.

How does diabetic retinopathy occur?

- DR occurs when chronic high blood sugar levels result in changes in blood flow that damage small blood vessels in the retina of the eye. The blood vessels can leak and bleed, abnormal blood vessels can grow, and retinal detachment can occur.
- DR usually affects both eyes and progresses over time through the early (non-proliferative) stages—which are usually asymptomatic (have no symptoms)—to the late (proliferative) stage when severe vision loss can occur.
- When symptoms of vision loss occur they include: spots, floaters, blank areas or dark areas in the visual field.
- DR can lead to an eye condition called diabetic macular oedema that can cause blurry vision at any stage of DR.

Normal retina vs **Diabetic retinopathy**

The diagram shows a normal retina with labels for Cornea, Iris, Pupil, Lens, Blood, Optic Nerve, and Macula. In contrast, the diabetic retinopathy diagram shows 'Build up of tissue fluid (Macular oedema)', 'Abnormal growth of blood vessels', and 'Blood leakage'.

For more info: diabetes.ecu.edu.au/health-conditions/eye/health-care-professionals/ International Diabetes Federation and The Fred Hollows Foundation, 2015. Source: Indigenous Eye Health.

Logos: ECU, The Fred Hollows Foundation, Indigenous Health/InfoNet.

HealthInfoByte

Video: Eye health web resource

Eye health news

17 May 2017
Government Funded Initiative to Increase Eye Health Access for Indigenous Australians
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Development Effectiveness Bulletins

The Fred Hollows Foundation

Increased uptake of the eye health web resource

The HealthInfoNet have been monitoring the progress and usage of the eye health web resource since the collaboration with IAP. By the end of 2016, there had already been a noticeable increase in usage. The Eye Health Section recorded 2,868 page views between September and December 2016, which was a 55% increase over the same period last year (when there were 1,845 page views). The number of users increased by 20%, from 753 to 903 users.

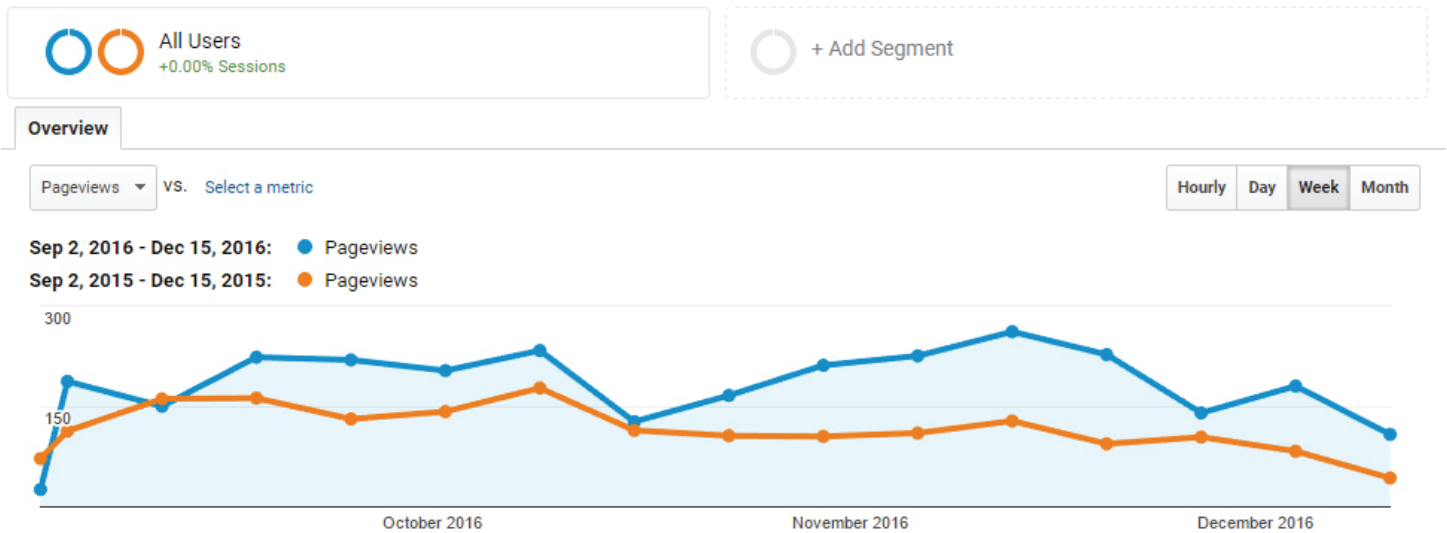


Figure 1. Number of page views in the Eye health section, by week, 2 September to 15 December 2016 (blue) compared with the same period in 2015 (orange)

The Eye Health Workforce Portal recorded 2,329 page views during the same reporting period which was a 121% increase over the same period last year (when there was 1,055 page views). The number of users increased by 19%, from 349 to 416 users.

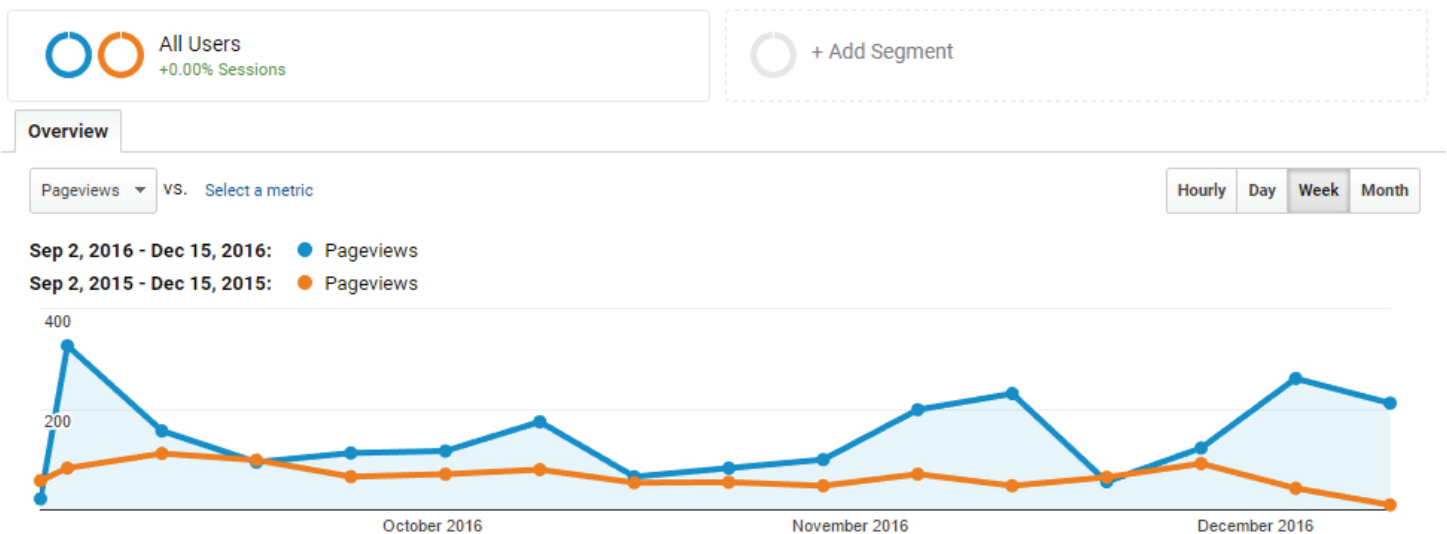


Figure 2. Number of page views in the Eye Health Workforce Portal, by week, 2 September to 15 December 2016 (blue) compared with the same period in 2015 (orange)

Plans for 2017

IAP is continuing to collaborate with the HealthInfoNet in 2017 with ongoing plans to further expand on work already undertaken which will include:

- Maintaining the news features, newsletter, Twitter account and yarning place to distribute relevant eye health information and facilitate knowledge exchange.
- Conducting a webinar on diabetic retinopathy, the new MBS item, and associated equipment and training initiatives to update the eye health sector workforce regarding developments in this area.
- Developing an animated short video to educate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners on diabetic retinopathy.
- Converting the *Review of eye health among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people* (currently in draft at the HealthInfoNet) into an eBook to allow workers to utilise the review electronically, provide better access to associated links, and cut down on the costs associated with printing resources.
- Implementing and analysing a survey to: evaluate the existing eye health web resource, workforce portal, and yarning place; explore the information needs of the eye health workforce; identify areas of the web resource that could be expanded; and gain feedback on the current changes that have been made to the eye health web resource.

Future considerations beyond 2017

Sharing current data and information on eye health between services is important to:

- keep-up-to date
- inform work practices
- build networks and partnerships
- develop a better awareness of what is happening across the sector.

IAP envisage that the HealthInfoNet's eye health web resource will link with jurisdictional portals that will share data and information from local, jurisdictional and national levels. One of the future considerations for expanding and sharing eye health resources online is currently being considered by Brien Holden Vision Institute (BHVI) who are proposing to develop a Northern Territory Eye Care website. The website would be a central point of information about services, useful both for those working in the service (eye care service providers – especially visiting service providers, coordinators etc.) but also linking to other key reference points in NT Primary Health Care and to the HealthInfoNet eye health web resource, and potentially providing some information for patients/ community.



Health professionals at the Eye health web resource training workshop conducted in Darwin, 14 November 2016

Benefits of this collaboration

IAP has welcomed the collaboration with HealthInfoNet to provide new and up-to-date information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health. The Foundation works through direct partnerships with local service providers and focuses on the development and implementation of sustainable solutions to key gaps or weaknesses in the current eye health system providing care to people living in remote and underserved communities. The HealthInfoNet is committed to supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health workforce by collecting, developing, and sharing up-to-date evidence through its web based resources. Together, these organisations are making eye health resources available on the HealthInfoNet website, which makes both accessing and sharing information much easier.

Eye health workforce portal

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Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet

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Eye health workforce portal

Welcome to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health workers' web resource. The resource aims to provide the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health workforce and related workers with access to quality information about the eye health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Content includes key facts, publications, health promotion resources, practice resources, and programs and projects. Workforce information includes courses and training, job opportunities, conferences, workshops and events.

This web resource also supports an Eye health yarning place to encourage information sharing and collaboration among health professionals and others involved in eye health among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Eye and vision Examining the eye Vision loss and blindness Refractive error Cataract

Diabetic retinopathy Trachoma Other eye conditions Workforce About this resource

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Eye health

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HealthInfoByte
Video: Eye health web resource

Twitter
Tweets by @aiheye

AIHEyeHealth @aiheye
Job vacancy: Academic Specialist - Indigenous Eye