

**Enhancing rehabilitation services for Aboriginal Australians after brain injury:**

***Healing Right Way***

**NHMRC funded project 2017-2021**

**The Research Team:** The team is a multidisciplinary group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers with a significant track record in undertaking research exploring Aboriginal people's experiences of stroke and traumatic brain injury.

**Chief Investigators**

- Professor Elizabeth Armstrong, Speech Pathology, Edith Cowan University
- Associate Professor Deborah Hersh, Speech Pathology, Edith Cowan University
- Associate Professor Judith Katzenellenbogen, Telethon Institute/UWA
- Professor Sandra Thompson, WA Centre for Rural Health/UWA
- Associate Professor Natalie Ciccone, Speech Pathology, Edith Cowan University
- Professor Leon Flicker, Royal Perth Hospital/University of Western Australia
- Professor Juli Coffin, Notre Dame University
- Dr Tapan Rai, School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences, University of Technology, Sydney
- Associate Professor Dominique Cadilhac, Faculty of Medicine, Monash University
- Associate Professor Erin Godecke, Speech Pathology, Edith Cowan University

**Associate Investigators**

- Professor Graeme Hankey, School of Medicine & Pharmacology, UWA
- Dr Ivan Lin, WA Centre for Rural Health/UWA
- Professor Colleen Hayward, Kurongkurl Katitjin, Edith Cowan University
- Deborah Woods, Geraldton Aboriginal Medical Service
- Professor Neil Drew, HealthInfoNet, ECU

**Partners**

Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Royal Perth Hospital, St John of God Public Hospital Midland, Fiona Stanley-Fremantle Hospitals, Western Australian Country Health Service (for sites in Broome, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton, and Port Hedland), Royal Perth Hospital Medical Research Foundation, Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service, Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services, Bega Garabirringu Health Services, Warrika Maya Health Service, the Neurological Council of Western Australia and the national Stroke Foundation.

**Aims and activities of the Healing Right Way project:**

The research team's *Missing Voices* project (NHMRC funded 2012-2016) revealed poor access to care, rehabilitation and support following an acute brain injury (stroke or traumatic brain injury). In order to address this, the current project aims:

1. To improve access to inter-disciplinary and culturally appropriate rehabilitation services for Aboriginal people following brain injury (stroke and traumatic brain injury) in Western Australia.
2. To improve medical, functional and psycho-social outcomes for Aboriginal people following stroke and traumatic brain injury
3. To establish a costing model for the above which will contribute to service sustainability and planning of future services.

The activities of the *Healing Right Way* project will include:

- Training of relevant hospital staff in culturally secure rehabilitation practices;
- The development of culturally appropriate rehabilitation educational and practical resource materials;
- The implementation of an Aboriginal Brain Injury Coordinator program. Aboriginal Brain Injury Coordinators will work with patients who have experienced a stroke or traumatic brain injury and their families from the acute stages of their care and for six months afterward. The Aboriginal Brain Injury Coordinator will act as a specialist resources for participants of the *Healing Right Way* study and their activities will be aimed at enhancing the participant's rehabilitation. This will include liaison, care coordination and linkage, education and advocacy. The Aboriginal Brain Injury Coordinator will work with participants in a variety of settings including the hospital wards, health centres/clinics, outpatient settings, in the community and home environments.

**Expected outcomes of the Healing Right Way study:**

- Increased engagement between health providers and Aboriginal people who experience stroke and traumatic brain injury
- Improved short term (6 months) health and functional activity and participation outcomes of Aboriginal people who experience a stroke or traumatic brain injury
- A best practice model for providing culturally secure brain injury rehabilitation services to Aboriginal people across WA and a model potentially to be used nationally with local modifications
- The first data on short term health and functional outcomes for Aboriginal people who experience brain injury
- The first cost modelling of culturally secure rehabilitation services

Eight hospitals around Western Australia are involved in the *Healing Right Way* study. The study will involve a control period for all sites for a minimum of six months. In 2018 the cultural security training and Aboriginal Brain injury Coordinator program will be introduced at two hospital sites, with two further sites being introduced every six months until all eight are involved.

**For further information about the Healing Right Way study, please contact:**

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