

Sharing is caring when it comes to chronic illness

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Sharing stories and health information with friends and families gives strength to Indigenous Australians living with chronic illness, a new study has found.

Conducted by the Menzies Centre for [Health Policy](#) based at The Australian National University and the University of Sydney, People I Can Call On examined the experiences and views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with [heart disease](#), [diabetes](#) and [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease](#).

A report on the study's key findings was launched by Minister for Indigenous [Health](#), the Hon Warren Snowdon MP at Parliament House today.

Director of the Menzies Center, Mr. Bob Wells, said the study's report provides important insight into the real-life issues and day-to-day realities of [Indigenous people](#) living with [chronic illness](#) and should inform future health policy.

“People I Can Call On describes the great strength of family and community networks that support Indigenous people with chronic illness. It shows the importance of family in motivating people to better care for themselves and to be an example to their children and grandchildren so that they grow up knowing and practicing good health behaviours.

“It also reveals the importance of health services that provide safe and culturally appropriate services and treat their consumers with respect. Sadly, the report also chronicles the long term effect of disrespectful and racist experiences that deter Indigenous people from using services that could otherwise offer help.

“These findings are an important addition to the body of knowledge that should inform policies aimed at improving the health of Indigenous Australians,” he said.

The report tables nine key recommendations including the creation of support programs for Indigenous Australian which build health literacy, the implementation of specific carer health programs, training more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers and increased recruitment and retention of Indigenous people in the health workforce.

“The health of Indigenous Australians is still a matter for great concern and life expectancy still falls short of the non-Indigenous community by some 10 years,” said Mr Wells. “Many of those lives are cut short because of chronic illnesses like heart disease and diabetes.

“That’s why this report is so important. It captures the views of

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living with chronic illness and it details their ‘user experiences’ of the health sector.

“And, in the age of closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, it also offers practical suggestions on how mainstream health services might work more successfully and with better outcomes for their Indigenous users.

Provided by Australian National University

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