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Reporting on key nutrition indicators as a decision support tool to improve diet quality in remote Indigenous Australian communities

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Introduction: Most food consumed in remote Indigenous Australian communities is purchased at the local store that in many instances belongs to the community and is governed by community representatives (store directors) [1]. These community representatives and remote retailers are therefore key decision makers to optimise stores to support healthier eating and reduce obesity and preventable chronic disease. Reports tracking diet quality indicators can be a powerful decision-support tool for supporting this process [2].

Aim: We aimed to develop timely, accessible, easy to interpret and evidence-informed reports (FoodFox reports) on indicators of community-level diet quality.

Methods: To inform report development we examined best evidence, consulted with Indigenous Australian store directors in 3 communities and collected 18 months of sales data from 31 stores across the Northern Territory, Far North Queensland and the Torres Strait. Reports were made available to participating stores and follow-up interviews occurred with store managers to inform future implementation.

Outcomes: Consultation with Indigenous Australia community representatives (store directors) indicated that they were eager to receive reports to inform their decision-making and that they saw the reports as having potential value in optimising stores to support healthier food and drink choices. They also provided specific feedback regarding cultural relevance of language and data visuals which was used to refine the reports. The resulting reports show key food indicators tracked longitudinally and benchmarked against dietary guideline targets, store goals and the average of participating stores. The indicators (6 food groups and 40 subgroups) and categorisation (Best Choices, Less Healthy Choices and Unhealthy Choices) align with Australian Dietary Guidelines. Store manager interviews identified several potential barriers and enablers to consistent and effective report dissemination and uptake.

Conclusion: These reports have potential as a decision support tool to improve diet quality and reduce obesity and chronic disease risk in remote Indigenous Australian communities.

References

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Obesity and increased cancer risk: the development of a public health education campaign

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Background: Obesity is recognised as a preventative risk factor for 13 types of cancer [1] and community awareness of this connection is low [2,3]. Currently approximately 63% of Australians are overweight or obese and an important contributor to this problem is excessive sugary drink consumption [4,5]. Cancer Council Victoria is investing in a mass media public education campaign that will be one of the first in Australia to highlight the association between obesity and cancer risk.

Aim: To conduct a public health education campaign that aims to:

Increase community awareness of the link between obesity and risk of cancer.
Increase awareness that sugary drinks can contribute to weight gain.

Methods: The campaign has been informed by existing epidemiological evidence, clinical network engagement and empirical and qualitative research on weight and lifestyle to evaluate advertising. The resultant mass media campaign and supporting website will be launched in October 2018. Stakeholders from eating disorder, mental health and women's health groups were also consulted.

Results: A TV commercial, depicting a surgeon warning of the harmful effects that sugary drinks have on risk of weight gain and in turn increased risk of certain cancers was chosen. The ad was chosen based on focus testing feedback on its believability, sense of personal susceptibility and motivation and urgency for behaviour change. The campaign will be accompanied by supporting digital and outdoor media, and supportive website with information, videos, animations and lifestyle strategies to reduce cancer risk.

Conclusion: The campaign will run in October and November 2018 in Victoria. Evaluation results will be available following the campaign.

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Simulated economic impacts of Australian Obesity Management Algorithm implementation: microsimulation modelling to 2030

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Obesity is a complex, multi-factorial chronic disease, affecting 28% of Australian adults in 2015 [1]. In 2016, The Australian Obesity Management Algorithm, a practical clinical tool for use in primary care, was released. The Algorithm sets target weight loss for four