



Reply to Letter to the Editor

Reply to letter to the editor in response to the article “Communication-based interventions for increasing influenza vaccination rates among Aboriginal children: A randomised controlled trial”



We would like to thank the authors of this letter for taking the time to engage with our paper, “Communication-based interventions for increasing influenza vaccination rates among Aboriginal children: A randomised controlled trial.” Although the study resulted in a modest increase in immunisation rates, we recognise that there remains a substantial challenge to be addressed in optimising immunisation coverage in this population.

We respect and agree with the recommendations outlined in the letter to make First Nations people central to trial development and implementation.

We acknowledge that our engagement with the Aboriginal community in Victoria, while not completely absent, was not best practice. When designing the interventions, we drew upon findings from previous studies and consulted with Aboriginal Victoria and the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) to inform intervention design. In part, this limited engagement was driven by the timing of the trial which only allowed a limited time to put the trial in field in between recognising the need to address low influenza vaccination rates among Aboriginal children and the start of the influenza season in Victoria.

After the completion of the trial, we presented the results at the 6th annual National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) symposium on research translation, co-hosted by the Lowitja Institute [1]. The symposium had a strong focus on First Nations people’s health. We took the opportunity to incorporate suggestions from the audience regarding the interpretation of our results and in recommending future initiatives.

We also see how such partnerships can enrich interpretation of trial findings and exploration of further avenues of enquiry. In acknowledging these insights, we are aware that our research colleagues in countries such as New Zealand and Canada do their work in the context of treaty arrangements that embed such practices from the onset of research. Whilst Australia does not have a treaty with our First Nations people, we are fortunate that our state, Victoria, is pursuing this ambition [2].

At the conclusion of any research project there are lessons from the research findings, and lessons from the way the research was conducted. We again thank the authors of this letter for reinforcing the important lessons we learned from our first trial focussed on a First Nations group.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] <https://nhmrc.gov.au/event/2017-nhmrc-symposium-research-translation>.
- [2] <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/publications/research-papers/download/36-research-papers/13870-treaties-and-self-determination-case-studies-from-international-jurisdictions>.

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