

Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet

A valuable time-saving resource for everyone involved in Indigenous health

The Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet website (<http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au>) is the most comprehensive source of up-to-date, authoritative information on Indigenous health.

To attain its goal of contributing to improving the health of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, HealthInfoNet gives a wide range of potential users easy access to high quality information about health and related issues.

For policy-makers, health service providers and program managers, there is an up-to-date subject review, and sections about policies, strategies and programs. For clinicians and other health professionals there are recent journal articles, theses, and clinical guidelines, and most practitioners will find the links to relevant organisations useful. For researchers, academics and tertiary students, there is a list of key references on each subject and a downloadable bibliography of relevant sources.

HealthInfoNet's overview, which is updated three times a year, is the most comprehensive summary of Indigenous health available. A shorter, plain language summary of Indigenous health is also provided. A useful section for secondary students and general readers is FAQs (frequently asked questions), which provides summary information about a wide range of issues.

HealthInfoNet also aims to facilitate active sharing of information among people involved in specific areas of Indigenous health (initially, cardiovascular disease, tobacco control and road safety) by supporting "communities of practice (CoP)". These are defined as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly". CoP activities are supported by a listserv, an electronic discussion board, and the capacity to upload information for sharing with other people.

The HealthInfoNet team also works directly with Indigenous health workers to encourage them to make use of the health resources on the Internet. This work includes running special training workshops and conducting HealthInternet cafés at relevant conferences.

The HealthInfoNet's work is undertaken by a small part-time team at Kurungkurl Katitjin, the School of Indigenous Australian Studies at Edith Cowan University, Perth, assisted by an extensive Australia-wide network of consultants. The consultants help in the essential peer-review process of the academic materials on the site. The information on the site also reflects the experience of HealthInfoNet's Director,



Professor Neil Thomson points out features of the HealthInfoNet website to Professor Mick Dodson, Chair of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

Professor Neil Thomson, who has worked as a doctor with Indigenous people in the Kimberley area and in Perth. His work with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare affirmed his belief in the need for quality information to inform policy and program development and practice in Indigenous health.

The core functions of the HealthInfoNet are supported by a grant from the Australian Department of Health and Ageing's Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, with funds for other activities acquired from a variety of sources.

The Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet is at the forefront of knowledge sharing in the health sector. Readers who haven't yet used the site are invited to check it out next time they need information on Indigenous health.

Neil J Thomson

Professor

Kurungkurl Katitjin, School of Indigenous Australian Studies
Edith Cowan University, 2 Bradford Street, Mt Lawley, Perth, WA 6050
n.thomson@ecu.edu.au