

Coalition for Research to Improve Aboriginal Health

New South Wales is home to a greater number of Aboriginal people than any other Australian state or territory, and has the largest numbers of Aboriginal people living in urban areas.

The Coalition for Research to Improve Aboriginal Health (CRIAIAH) is an unprecedented partnership between Aboriginal communities and researchers, working together to encourage and facilitate research that will improve Aboriginal health.

CRIAIAH will work to develop a better understanding between researchers and Aboriginal communities in order to best use the expertise of both groups in improving health. Methods will be developed to ensure the findings of research undertaken by the coalition impacts on policy and practice.

CRIAIAH will develop programs in areas perceived as important by Aboriginal communities and build capacity among Aboriginal health researchers.



Achievements

CRIAIAH already has a number of achievements, including:

- Publication of a review of research in Aboriginal health in NSW which indicates that NSW receives a very small percentage of competitive Commonwealth research funds available for Aboriginal health research. This work also identified a network of individuals undertaking research in Aboriginal health in NSW.
- An analysis of the usefulness of the service activity reports from the Aboriginal Medical Services as a research tool.
- Establishment of an Aboriginal Researcher Advisory Group to support health researchers from Aboriginal backgrounds.
- Establishment of a career development funding scheme for researchers from Aboriginal backgrounds. Over time this scheme will contribute to the number of Aboriginal health researchers in NSW.
- Establishment of a major research program into environmental issues and Aboriginal child health, the Study of Environment on Aboriginal Resilience and Child Health (SEARCH). The SEARCH program involves six Aboriginal Medical Services and leading researchers in NSW.
- Planning of a research program into lupus in Aboriginal communities in NSW. Small studies in other states suggest that lupus is twice as common among Aboriginal people compared with non-Aboriginal people.



Study of Environment on Aboriginal Resilience and Child Health (SEARCH)

The SEARCH program is a coalition led by the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AHMRC), Aboriginal Medical Services (AMSs), the Institute for Health Research and leading health researchers in NSW. NSW Health, the Aboriginal Housing Office and the Rio Tinto Aboriginal Foundation are partners in the program.

The SEARCH program addresses priorities identified by Aboriginal communities in NSW, with a particular focus on previously under-researched Aboriginal people who live in major cities and the urban periphery. It will:

- describe and investigate the causes of health and illness in Aboriginal children with a focus on healthy environments and selected child health problems; and
- determine whether a community-appointed health broker can improve ear health in Aboriginal children and the quality of housing of their families.

SEARCH will provide early information through a cross sectional study. It will also establish a cohort of 800 families in urban and large regional centres willing to participate in research over a much longer time period, in partnership with their Aboriginal Medical Services.