Reviewer's report

Title: Reducing the health disparities of Indigenous Australians: Time to change focus

Version: 2 Date: 23 January 2012

Reviewer: Peter Crampton

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written paper with a clear focus and well-stated messages. The paper combines the results of analysis of in-depth interviews with three doctors, followed by validation through informal discussions with medical colleagues and practitioners, with a critical analysis of relevant literature.

Major Compulsory

Racism is defined, as is anti-racism, but the term race is not defined and similarly is not defined in relation to competing/complementary concepts such as ethnicity. The authors should define the concept of race.

The results and discussion are presented as one section. This structure makes it hard to distinguish data arising from the interviews and subsequent analysis from the authors' own discussion of the literature. I infer that from the section ‘Models of care’ onwards, the content of the paper is largely discussion as none of this material is supported by quotes (I presume, for example, that the section on the effects of a market economy and neoliberalism reflect the views of the authors rather than the views of the interviewees?). I recommend that the results and discussion are clearly separated out into different sections so that the interviews and analyses are distinct from the discussion section.

The limitations of the study should be discussed in the discussion section of the study. As it stands, limitations are not described other than the lack of input from doctors working in rural areas and from indigenous doctors. Other limitations might include, for example, interviews being restricted to three doctors. Acknowledging that the study’s intention was to focus on high-quality, in-depth insights from experienced doctors rather than from any pre-specified larger number of participants, nevertheless, the study’s reliance on three interviewees should be commented on in the limitations section. Similarly, actual and theoretical limitations of the analytical methods should be commented on.

Minor essential

In the abstract, in the last line of the results section, insert the words ‘their sense of’: ‘...lowering expectations and their sense of self-worth.’

In the abstract, in the last line of the conclusions, and also in the final paragraph of the discussion section, I suggest deleting the word ‘historically’ as the authors
are describing a contemporary phenomenon (as demonstrated in their results).

Page 4 last line: delete the word ‘nations’ and replace with ‘people’.

Can the authors please consider whether the statement on page 8 (‘many of those treated will form part of the elderly living with a poor quality of life, well illustrated by our burgeoning epidemic of dementia’) is a negative value judgement and, as such, is a distraction (after all, what is the alternative to providing care for old people with dementia?). The main part of the sentence makes a good point without needing this example.

Page 15: the first sentence of the third paragraph (‘This scenario…’) doesn’t make complete sense to me and would benefit from some minor re-wording.

Page 17: I suggest insert the word ‘for’ in the heading: ‘Accountability for translating…’.

Page 19: M#ori words are not pluralised with an ‘s’, so the plural of M#ori is M#ori.

Page 19, last line: a full stop is missing.

Page 24, last two lines of the last sentence of the paper: the wording of this sentence can be improved maybe along the lines of: ‘…changing the discourse that places Indigenous people a the centre of the problem in Australia along with the failed service approaches that exist’.

Discretionary revisions

Three papers by Harris and colleagues may provide useful material for the authors:


3. Harris et al (2012). The pervasive effects of racism: Experiences of racial discrimination in New Zealand over time and associations with multiple health domains. Social Science and Medicine, 74: 408–415

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published
**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.