




Identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status

By Dr Karen Nicholls

It is essential to identify Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander patients to enable the delivery of culturally appropriate and safe medical care. Identification also allows appropriate screening and management of specific medical conditions. Under-identification in general practice is well known to occur. Approximately 50% of First Nations Australians use only mainstream general practice. In a [study](#) from 2016, over one quarter of registrars described low confidence in identifying First Nations patients within their clinical practice. This teaching plan will assist supervisors in supporting registrars in identifying First Nations patients, documenting identification in clinical software, using correct terminology (as well as awareness of offensive terminology), and considering some aspects of culturally safe communication.

TEACHING AND LEARNING AREAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits of effective identification of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status – clinical, cultural, preventive care, Medicare etc. • Definitions of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status - self-identification of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status in general practice is acceptable • How to word the identification question – ‘Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?’ • Documentation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status in the clinical software • Fostering an individual and practice culture where Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people can feel safe with self-identification and engagement • Appropriate terminology for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people around Australia and avoiding offensive terms 				
PRE- SESSION ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the RACGP resource Identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australian general practice • Reflect on your confidence in asking patients about their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status 				
SESSION ACTIVITIES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the benefits of effective identification of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status to the patient and the doctor - appropriate clinical care, preventive care, cardiovascular risk assessment, health checks, co-payments, culturally safe care etc. • Role play a scenario including identification of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status • Demonstrate how to document a person’s Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status • Discuss the appropriate terminology when referring to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in the local area 				
RESOURCES 	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Read</td><td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AIHW 2103 Taking the next steps: identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status in general practice </td></tr> <tr> <td>Watch</td><td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why Summer May Finlay made this short clip – a great video on appropriate terminology </td></tr> </table>	Read	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AIHW 2103 Taking the next steps: identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status in general practice 	Watch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why Summer May Finlay made this short clip – a great video on appropriate terminology
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FOLLOW UP & EXTENSION ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an audit on the number of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander patients in your practice, and the proportion where status is not recorded • Undertake the AIHW health professional training tool 				