

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

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ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	A service-level action research intervention to improve identification and treatment of cannabis and related mental health issues in young Indigenous Australians: study protocol
AUTHORS	Bohanna, India; Bird, Katrina; Copeland, Jan; Roberts, Nicholas; Clough, Alan

VERSION 1 - REVIEW

REVIEWER	Gregory Pratt QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute Australia
REVIEW RETURNED	03-Jun-2014

GENERAL COMMENTS	A proposal that seeks to describe a sensitive process for the development and evaluation of local health intervention strategies. Going beyond the intervention level and proposing infrastructural and engagement that seek to influence workforce and attitudinal enablers. My reading of the work herein is that it seeks to develop, implement and evaluate treatments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people with cannabis use and mental health issues; to investigate what constitutes effective treatment; and to describe the processes involved in empowering the service sector to develop and evidence these practices. Limitations of this work will form part of the final evaluation. The project seems to propose a multilevel approach to "intervention", seeking to evaluate the effectiveness of action research in describing local need and empowering service delivery resources to develop sensitive clinical and population health "interventions". In describing the target audience and investigative processes, I found interchangeable use of the term "intervention", confusing. In so much as the project seeks to inform how services collect, plan, develop and implement evidence based treatment, the project is indeed an "intervention". However, in the context of a target audience that is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, "intervention" also refers to clinical and health promotion aspects of service delivery. Perhaps an explanation of the different aspects of this project as a multilevel "intervention" that describes the target audience as the
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	service sector and the beneficiary as young Indigenous Australians with cannabis use and mental health issues?
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REVIEWER	Phil Crane Queensland University of Technology Australia
REVIEW RETURNED	10-Jun-2014

GENERAL COMMENTS	The paper outlines a protocol development and evaluation process that investigates intervention strategies in a complex area of practice by articulating a suite of robust methods into a pre and post intervention process. The participatory action research and realist evaluation approaches indicated are highly relevant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander implementation studies. There are some minor clarifications and alterations needed to the text (see below). The terms 'strategies', 'components' and 'programs' are used in the text, in Figure 1 and in Table 4 to refer to elements of what is to be implemented and evaluated. Further consistency and/ or explanation is required across the article in respect of how this terminology is used. Figure 1 box in the middle column 'Develop and implement cannabis and mental health programs for ' is not complete. This may be due to formatting not making the next line visible. References 4 and 5 are the same. Author Lee, KK in references 25 and 26 should be Lee, KSK Page 10 the phrase 'refined for further testing' should be more fully explained. Page 11 the text 'facilitate the work and support staff' needs clearer explanation. Page 12 the sentence 'An action research approach is necessary' should be further justified. Whilst it is the view of the reviewer that the participatory action research approach being used is very appropriate for the study, some further attention to this in the Methods/ Design section (page 6) would strengthen the article. Page 13 the sentence beginning 'In metropolitan and regional centres ...' should be restructured.
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer Name: Gregory Pratt

A proposal that seeks to describe a sensitive process for the development and evaluation of local health intervention strategies. Going beyond the intervention level and proposing infrastructural and engagement that seek to influence workforce and attitudinal enablers.

My reading of the work herein is that it seeks to develop, implement and evaluate treatments for

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people with cannabis use and mental health issues; to investigate what constitutes effective treatment; and to describe the processes involved in empowering the service sector to develop and evidence these practices.

The project seems to propose a multilevel approach to "intervention", seeking to evaluate the effectiveness of action research in describing local need and empowering service delivery resources to develop sensitive clinical and population health "interventions".

In describing the target audience and investigative processes, I found interchangeable use of the term "intervention", confusing. In so much as the project seeks to inform how services collect, plan, develop and implement evidence based treatment, the project is indeed an "intervention". However, in the context of a target audience that is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, "intervention" also refers to clinical and health promotion aspects of service delivery. Perhaps an explanation of the different aspects of this project as a multilevel "intervention" that describes the target audience as the service sector and the beneficiary as young Indigenous Australians with cannabis use and mental health issues?

Response: the reviewer's comments are appreciated and have improved the manuscript. To reduce confusion, we have more consistently and comprehensively described the intervention. In addition, the term "intervention" is now used only to describe the service-level multicomponent intervention, not to describe activities conducted with clients to reduce cannabis use. The following statement has been included:

Page 6: "This study will use an action research service-level intervention approach within participating services to influence practice and effect sustainable change. In this study the targets of the intervention are the services. The intervention is conducted at a service level and thus does not seek to reduce cannabis use rates in young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients directly through individual-level strategies. Nevertheless examination of changes in cross-sectional client cannabis use will be included."

Reviewer Name: Phil Crane

The paper outlines a protocol development and evaluation process that investigates intervention strategies in a complex area of practice by articulating a suite of robust methods into a pre and post intervention process. The participatory action research and realist evaluation approaches indicated are highly relevant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander implementation studies.

There are some minor clarifications and alterations needed to the text (see below).

1. The terms 'strategies', 'components' and 'programs' are used in the text, in Figure 1 and in Table 4 to refer to elements of what is to be implemented and evaluated. Further consistency and/ or explanation is required across the article in respect of how this terminology is used.

Response: The authors thank the reviewer for their comments. The changes made have significantly improved the manuscript. This inconsistency in use of terms has been removed. The term "strategies" is used throughout to describe the intervention activities.

2. Figure 1 box in the middle column 'Develop and implement cannabis and mental health programs for ' is not complete. This may be due to formatting not making the next line visible.

Response: This has been corrected.

3. References 4 and 5 are the same.

Response: This has been corrected.

4. Author Lee, KK in references 25 and 26 should be Lee, KSK

Response: This has been corrected.

5. Page 10 the phrase 'refined for further testing' should be more fully explained.

Response: The statement above has been replaced by the following:

Page 10: "In a series of learning and information-sharing sessions with staff, the effectiveness of the intervention will be assessed. Using this method, any changes to the intervention strategies identified by staff or stakeholders as necessary will be implemented, thus refining the strategies."

6. Page 11 the text 'facilitate the work and support staff' needs clearer explanation.

Response: This statement has been clarified:

Page 11/12 "Researchers facilitate the work and support staff but will not implement any intervention strategies directly. The researchers will provide facilitation and support in the following ways; regular site visits (approximately one visit per month), analysis of peer-reviewed evidence to inform development of strategies, ongoing data analysis & feedback, report writing, organization of site visits by relevant experts."

7. Page 12 the sentence 'An action research approach is necessary' should be further justified. Whilst it is the view of the reviewer that the participatory action research approach being used is very appropriate for the study, some further attention to this in the Methods/ Design section (page 6) would strengthen the article.

Response: Greater detail has been provided in the Methods:

Page 6: "This study will use a participatory action research approach within services to influence practice and effect sustainable change at the service level. This approach is endorsed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research given that it emphasises participation by the people being studied, cultural respect, capacity building, and collaboration (Bailie et al., 2007). A key feature of the action research approach to be used in this study are "cyclical activities involving examination of existing processes, change monitoring the apparent effects if the change, and further change." (Lilford et al., 2003). This will help the services develop and implement practical strategies to improve identification and treatment of cannabis and related mental health issues in their young Indigenous clients. The participatory approach encourages the services and staff to take ownership of the research and contribute to the development of sustainable changes in practice. In this study the targets of the intervention are the services. The intervention is conducted at a service level and thus does not seek to reduce cannabis use rates in young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients directly through individual-level strategies. Nevertheless examination of changes in cross-sectional client cannabis use will be included.

The statement "An action research approach is necessary" has been removed from the Limitations" section.

8. Page 13 the sentence beginning 'In metropolitan and regional centres ...' should be restructured.

Response: the sentence has been replaced by the following

Page 13: "There is little data for Indigenous youth in metropolitan and regional centres. This population is hard to access because they are embedded within populations many times greater than the small discrete communities that typify remote northern Australia."