

Speech pathology services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults with acquired communication disorders: A systematic quantitative literature review

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Background

Health disparity – Stroke¹

- Prevalence of **stroke** is estimated to be **1.7 times higher** compared with non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island populations²
- Reasons for health disparity potentially complex^{3,4}
- Following stroke, 21–38% of the general population present with **acquired communication disorders (ACD)**⁵
- Given the higher rates of acquired neurological injuries in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, we might consequently expect higher likelihood of ACDs in these populations.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stroke patients are less likely than other non-Indigenous Australian populations to receive care in acute stroke units, and less likely to receive assessments by allied health staff within the recommended 48 hours of admission⁶
- **Complex health, linguistic and cultural backgrounds, as well as the presence of an ACD = likely challenges in delivering evidence-based speech pathology services**^{3,4}

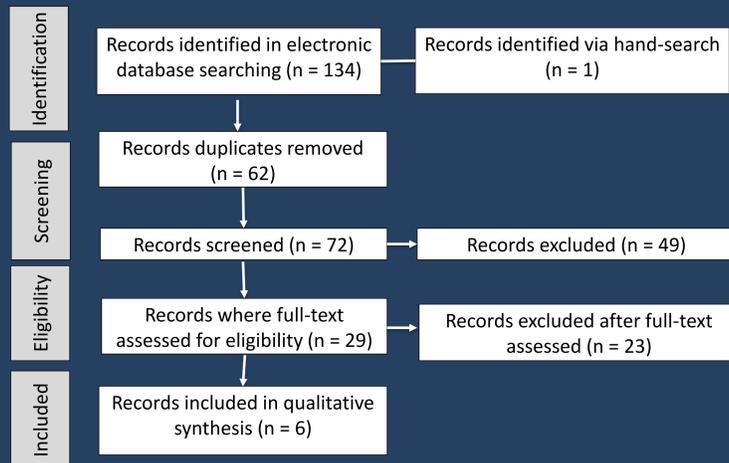
Aim: Explore speech pathology services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults with ACDs post-stroke. Research questions:

- What are the current speech pathology practices for working with this population?
- What do Indigenous Australian adults with ACDs post stroke, and their significant others, say about their experiences?
- What research methodologies have been employed to date for exploring this area and how can the research methodologies used to date inform future research?

Methods: Systematic quantitative literature review⁷ using PRISMA recommendations⁸; Studies published up to and including February 2016

Inclusion criteria:

- 1) Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island adult populations;
- 2) ACDs resulting from neurogenic etiologies;
- 3) Speech pathology or speech therapy; and
- 4) An original research paper published in a peer-reviewed journal.



Results and Discussion: A total of **6 articles** were identified using the search criteria; All published since 2012

1 state-based quantitative profile study including hospital and mortality data analysis⁹ (777 Aboriginal people's records with ACD)

2 qualitative studies investigated perspectives of Aboriginal people with ACD:
- Semi-structured in-depth interviews (16 Aboriginal people with ACD and 4 family members; Perth based)^{13,14}



3 studies investigated perspectives of speech pathologists:

- 2 qualitative
 - Semi-structured in-depth interviews 7 SPs - Nth QLD¹²
 - Single case narrative interview 1 SP – NT¹²
- 1 National on-line survey¹⁰ (63 SPs – all states and territories except ACT)



Speech Pathology Practices

✗ Lack of culturally appropriate assessment & treatment resources¹⁰⁻¹²

✗ Unsure how to engage Indigenous Liaison Officers (ILOs) and their role¹²

✗ Lack of interpreters

✓ Informal approaches, observation, flexibility, family¹⁰⁻¹²

✓ Time¹⁰⁻¹²

✓ Rapport, trust, interpersonal relationships¹⁰⁻¹²



Indigenous Australian adults with ACDs

- More likely to have a stroke at a **younger age**⁹ → potentially ACDs = likely significant impacts on education, employment, family roles and social opportunities
- **Aphasia diagnosis more common** in Indigenous Australian populations⁹
- Many **discharged from hospital against medical advice** and either **did not seek speech pathology services** or unable to access services^{13,14}
- All interviewees from within the **community sector of Western Australia**^{13,14}
- “Communication needed for maintaining social and family connection, life roles and the importance of yarning and mingling”^{13,14}
- “All had ongoing health concerns (e.g. diabetes, heart & kidney disease, & alcohol dependence) as well as stroke-related mobility impairments”^{13,14}



Research Methods

- Methodologies with Aboriginal participants = **qualitative** approaches, in-depth interviews, **Indigenous Reference Groups**, Aboriginal research assistants
- **Ethical conduct** guidelines as outlined by the AIATSIS¹⁵ & NHMRC¹⁶
- **Culturally safe** research methodology & rich data.

Conclusions

- Research emphasises the challenges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with ACDs may encounter and the importance of **integrating communication, family and community contexts into all speech pathology services.**
- Acute lack of culturally appropriate assessment resources therefore the **question of how speech pathologists arrive at a valid and reliable diagnosis of an ACD** when working with Australian Indigenous populations **remains unanswered.**
- Not clear what specific assessment, therapy and engagement approaches are used by speech pathologists, how they can best utilise and engage valuable ILO resources.
- Experiences specific to **Torres Strait Islander adults with ACDs, those living outside of Western Australia**, and those actively engaged in the **acute hospital setting** have not been included in studies to date.

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