

Improving capture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural information in electronic medical records

Lani Wilson¹, Candice McKenzie¹, Kath Feely¹⁻²

¹ The Royal Melbourne Hospital, ² The University of Melbourne



Introduction

Optimising medical records for First Nations Patients is critical to improving healthcare outcomes and addressing health disparities. Accurate and complete records ensure that healthcare providers have the necessary information required to deliver appropriate, culturally safe and effective healthcare interventions tailored to the specific needs of First Nations consumers and their communities.

In 2023 Aboriginal Health teams from four specialist public health services at the Parkville precinct in Victoria worked together to improve current use of the Parkville Electronic Medical Record (EMR) and develop standardised cultural information questions.

These questions will help to capture information about a patient's social and environmental factors impacting their health. This holistic view of health supports professionals to understand a patient's broader health context and improve patient trust and engagement in healthcare.

Finally, accurate healthcare information enables teams to track patient progress and facilitate appropriate follow-up.

Aim

Design data capture to improve **integrity and consistency** of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** information in Parkville EMR to:

Improve culturally safe and provision of health care at our organisations

Ensure ease of access to data

Respect people's culture and beliefs

Reduce discrimination

Provide Future Research opportunities

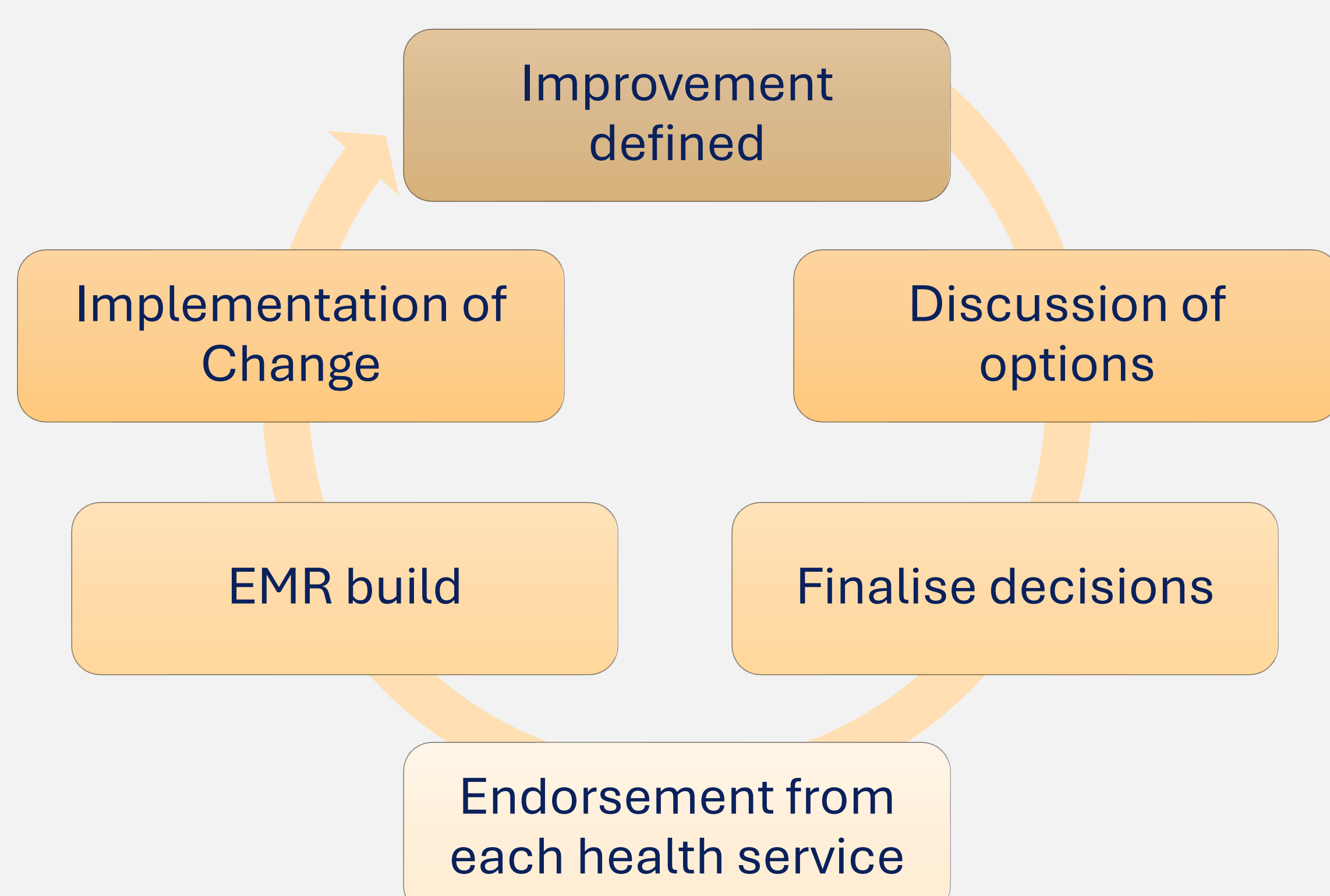
Methods

Coming together to meet

Four Aboriginal Health team's members
EMR experts from Parkville and Epic



Meeting	Outcomes
1 - 2	Identified opportunities to improve the EMR
3 - 4	Developed and endorsed a prioritised plan for improvement
4+	Standard process working through the list



Co-designing patient entered data points

Aboriginal Health staff used a specifically developed questionnaire to gather feedback from patients at The Royal Melbourne Hospital and The Royal Women's Hospital during the design process of the new culturally sensitive patient facing questions.

Results

Nine areas of improvement were identified that impacted all four health services, one impacted two health services and one improvement impacted one organisation. These are four of the key outcomes implemented.

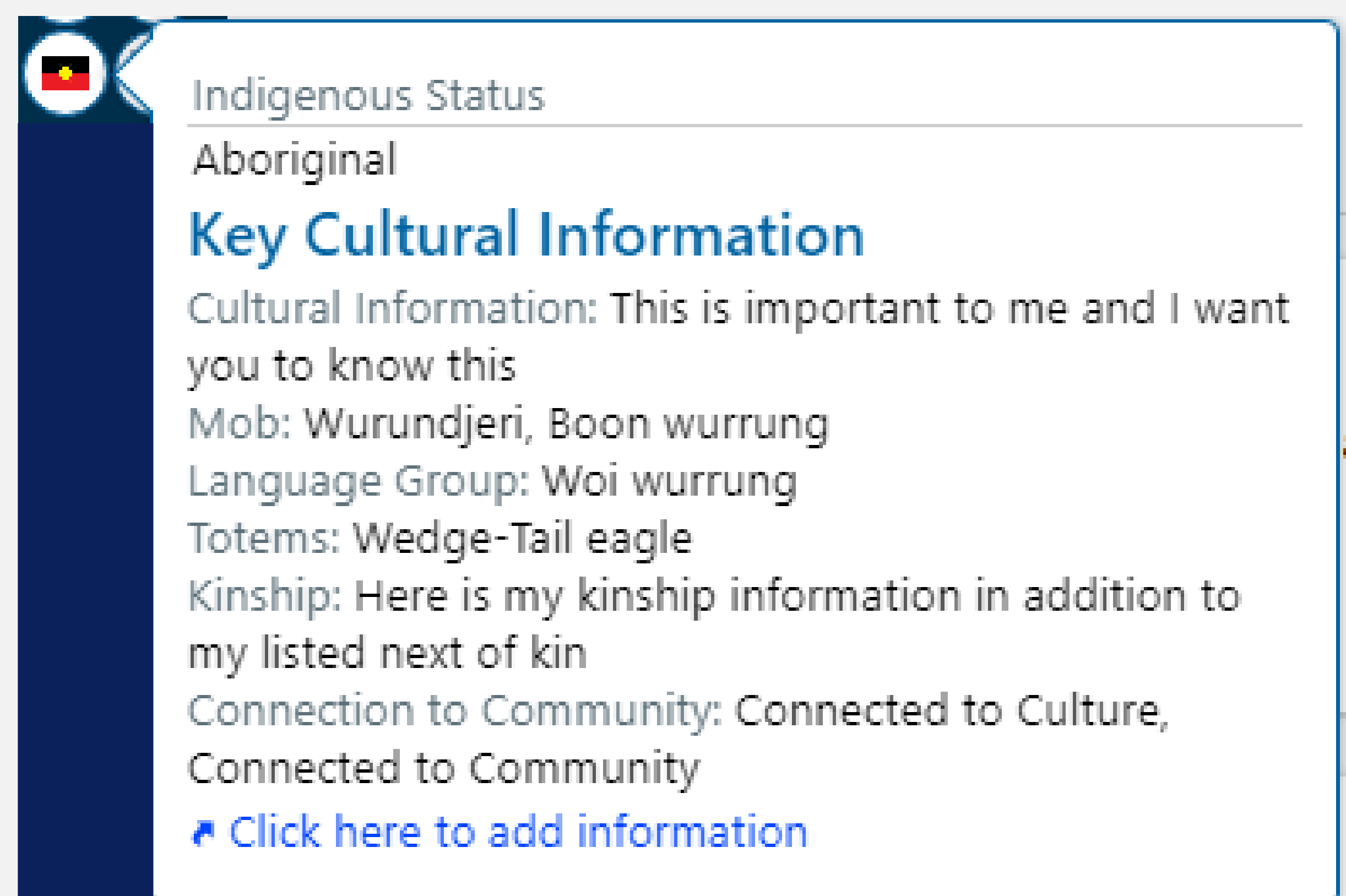
Visual flag in EMR for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

Once a person identifies their flag is displayed in the EMR
Aboriginal flag, Torres Strait Islander flag or both flags

Individual Cultural Information

The questions are available in our patient portal for First Nations people to complete providing their voice. Clinicians can also ask these questions.

Responses are easily accessed by all staff at our health services.



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Visibility of patients with First Nations kin

A question and discrete field was developed to provide simple and reliable identification of consumers who do not identify but have First Nations family members who Aboriginal Health teams support.

EMR reports were updated to improve this visibility.

Parkville electronic documentation standards implemented:

1. All occurrences use "**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander**" in full
2. Where there is a character limit use "**Aboriginal**"
3. The word **Indigenous** will **only** be used to describe the "Indigenous Status" statistical variable

Conclusion

Working together allowed us to implement priority improvements for cultural information to be captured. This has improved visibility for all staff to ensure they understand and respect what is important to the patient, ensuring we deliver excellent and culturally safe care to all First Nations communities.

The new data capture provides us future opportunities for research projects to continue to explore and drive excellent health care.

Acknowledgements and Contact Details

We would like to acknowledge:

Aboriginal Health teams at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, The Royal Children's Hospital, The Royal Melbourne Hospital and The Royal Women's Hospital; Parkville EMR central and local teams and Epic staff; our patient's who assisted with the cultural questions design.

Lani Wilson

lani.wilson@mh.org.au

Senior First Nation Hospital Liaison & Project Lead Officer