

# Listening to Aboriginal Men about their Radiation Therapy stories in Western NSW

## Background

Embracing Aboriginal perspectives plays a crucial role in reducing the disparities in cancer outcomes. The scarcity of research surrounding the experiences of Aboriginal men who have undergone radiation therapy highlights unaddressed needs and barriers. Understanding the challenges unique to this population can lead to interventions that are more effective and culturally sensitive.

## Methods

Phenomenology, combined with an Indigenist approach, was used to understand the participants' subjective experiences. The research team comprised of five members including two identifying as Aboriginal to ensure research rigour. Six Aboriginal men who had received radiation therapy treatment or follow-up within the last five years were interviewed either via telephone, or in-person. Open coding of the interview transcripts, and initial isolation of themes was performed by a single team member before a more collaborative thematic analysis approach was undertaken.

## Results

The study revealed the unique cancer journeys of participants and highlighted the need for personalised care. Family support played a crucial role in their experiences, and the need for dedicated Aboriginal Health Workers or Care Coordinators was stressed. Mistrust of the healthcare system, financial constraints and geographical isolation were some of the barriers noted. Participants emphasised the importance of raising awareness and improving education about cancer, as well as screening, treatment, and survivorship in ways that are culturally sensitive.

## Conclusion

Despite the positive accounts, persisting barriers for this community were highlighted in this study. The insights into the participants' experiences will guide future research and interventions to allow for equitable healthcare delivery, and improved health-seeking behaviors in Aboriginal men.

## Keywords

Radiation, Aboriginal, Phenomenology, Kapat, Treatment, Journey, Barriers, Education, Cultural, Stories.



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Rod is the Chief Radiation Therapist for Radiation Oncology across the WNSWLHD. As a 2019 RRCBP candidate he completed a qualitative study exploring the Radiation Therapy stories of Aboriginal men and plans to further investigate ways to improve their cancer journey and outcomes.



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