

AIDA Communique – Specialist Trainee Support Program

On 13 September 2022, AIDA held the second meeting of the Specialist Trainee Support Program (STSP) Cross-College Project Group (comprising 12 specialty colleges) on the Land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. The meeting continued AIDA and the College Consortium's work to support and grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander non-GP specialist workforce.

AIDA's STSP lead, Dr Karen Nicholls facilitated the meeting and introduced the AIDA STSP Medical Educator, Dr Angela Forrest. Dr Nicholls presented an update on AIDA's STSP activities and early indicators of success including:

- Culturally appropriate tailored support for trainees and prospective trainees contributing to three successful training applications and retention in training programs.
- Guidance and support provided to colleges to implement recruitment and retention initiatives.

Each College representative provided a summary of key commitments progressed since the last meeting. Following this discussion, the Consortium workshopped strategies on four issues that impact applicant and trainee success. These were:

1. Cultural safety in training.
2. Engaging with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander college members with consideration of cultural load.
3. Increasing identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants, trainees and fellows.
4. Reducing financial barriers to application and training.

Katherine Walsh from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) gave an excellent presentation on the College's work over the last five years to lead culture change to address bullying and harassment. A key component of this work has been leadership commitment to a long-term approach. Among RACS' strategies are:

- Review and rewrite of policies throughout the College.
- Mandated training attached to Fellowship renewal.
- Measures to monitor change.

Katherine noted that evidence shows that bullying and harassment impact on patient outcomes, just as evidence shows the impact of racism health outcomes.

Dr Karen Nicholls spoke to the responses from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors in training from the Medical Training Survey (MTS) 2021. AIDA has undertaken successful advocacy to have racism defined as a separate category for the 2022 MTS. Dr Nicholls noted that commitment is required to address racism, bullying, harassment and discrimination prevalent in training and employment and improve the culture in medicine to better support and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Trainees.

Key responses in 2021 MTS include:

- *Bullying, harassment and discrimination (including racism) by anyone is not tolerated at my workplace* (12% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors in training disagreed compared to 8% of the National response)
- *I know how to raise concerns/issues about bullying, harassment and discrimination (including racism in my workplace)* (8% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors disagreed compared to 5% of National response)
- *I am confident that I could raise concerns/issues about bullying, harassment and discrimination (including racism) in my workplace* (16% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors disagreed compared to 10% of National response)

Dr Nicholls continued the focus on retention and presented supports relevant to the group from AIDA's 2005 Healthy Futures: Defining best practice in the recruitment and retention of Indigenous medical students.

1. Professional development
2. Indigenous staff
3. Indigenous health support unit
4. Tutoring
5. Academic clinical support
6. Mentors and role models
7. Scholarships and financial assistance
8. Cultural safety
9. Indigenous content in curriculum
10. Indigenous community partnerships
11. Practical equipment grants
12. Collegiate support
13. Flexibility (additional recommendation by AIDA STSPP)

The group discussed information currently available to measure improvements in recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Trainees. In general, colleges have begun asking the question of Indigeneity in the last 8-10 years. The group noted that wording should be consistent with National standards and that a statement be included in relation to privacy rights and the purpose for collecting the data.

To continue their important work in support growth of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specialist workforce, the Consortium agreed to:

1. Develop a policy on cultural considerations (including leave) and a related supervisor resource.
2. Improve cultural safety and establish appropriate measures to monitor change.
3. Commit to a 100% retention target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Trainees for the next three months.
4. Collect and share additional data on retention, application and selection.
5. Ensure consistency of identification in line with National best practice standards.

In closing, Consortium members tabled their individual college commitments to progress before the next Cross-College meeting on 9 December 2022. College representatives shared the value they had received from participating in the meeting and collaborating and sharing initiatives in support of all colleges to drive change and improve recruitment, selection and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees.

Attendees

- Australian Indigenous Doctors Association
- Department of Health and Aged Care
- Australasian College of Dermatologists
- Australasian College of Sport and Exercise Physicians
- Australian College of Emergency Medicine
- Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
- Royal Australasian College of Physicians
- Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators
- College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand
- Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists