

Reflections

Dr Ross Ingram Memorial Prize 2012

The brain painting: “the snake eating away the life of your memory”

Highly commended Artwork



This painting is aimed at an Aboriginal audience and depicts the brain and “the snake eating away the life of your memory” to represent dementia. I intentionally used traditional dot painting style and storytelling to speak directly to Aboriginal people and to bring the causes and signs of dementia to their attention.

I am a Karajarri woman from Bidyadanga community in Western Australia. I was the project officer for the Indigenous Dementia Services Study, funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council and conducted by the Western Australian Centre for Health and Ageing at the University of Western Australia. This painting was used as the foundation for a health promotion poster based on the results of the study. The poster explains the risk factors for dementia in Aboriginal people as determined by the research group,



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including smoking, head injury, previous stroke, epilepsy and old age (listed in the spaces to the right of the brain in the poster).¹ This research also found that dementia is more widespread in Aboriginal men than women. Along with the risk factors, the poster highlights some of the signs of dementia to assist family in identifying the condition (listed in the spaces on the left of the brain in the poster).

Copies of the not-for-profit poster have been distributed Australia-wide and are displayed in health clinics, Aboriginal organisations and other related organisations. For copies of the poster, please contact wacha@uwa.edu.au.

¹ Smith K, Flicker L, Dwyer A, et al. Factors associated with dementia in Aboriginal Australians. *Aust N Z J Psychiatry* 2010; 44: 888-893.