

From the NHMRC

Special collection on Indigenous health

August 9 marked the United Nations International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. This year's theme was "Ensuring Indigenous peoples' health and wellbeing".

To mark this occasion, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) came together with the Cochrane Collaboration to publish a series of special collections of the Cochrane Library (<http://www.cochranelibrary.com>) on Indigenous health. This initiative is the latest to emerge from a 2002 tripartite agreement between NHMRC and our sister agencies in Canada and New Zealand (https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/file/your_health/indigenous/tripartite_letter_of_intent_for_web_121127.pdf) in which we cemented our commitment to working together to reduce the gap in health outcomes between our non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples.

The Special Collection focuses on three topics, each of which involves a significant health burden for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: prevention of suicide, foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and diabetes. The collection was compiled to engender greater awareness



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of disparities in health outcomes for Indigenous peoples globally, and to raise awareness of the need for better and more relevant research in each of these areas. For example, in the case of suicide prevention, most Cochrane reviews evaluate pharmacological interventions. None have evaluated non-drug interventions alone or community-based interventions. None of the Cochrane reviews of drugs appear to have involved studies in Indigenous populations.

If conducted well, and if they address relevant questions, systematic reviews have the potential to make significant improvements to health and health care — particularly if they are used as the basis for clinical practice, or public health guidelines and health policy. We hope that this collection will provide food for thought for producers and users of health and medical research.

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