

Cultural Protocols for General Practitioners

South East Alliance of General Practice



Colleen Lavelle
9/28/2010

CULTURAL PROTOCOLS

Health Practitioners have a responsibility to provide the best possible care they can to their clients/patients. This means knowing the history and background of patients to ensure the best possible care, and ensuring that they understand the cultural moors of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use verbal and non verbal signs when talking. Facial expressions and body language make up a part of the conversation. In western society a long silence usually means the end of the conversation, whereas with Aboriginal people the long gaps of silence can mean I am still thinking about what you said or I'm waiting for you to say more. They are not a sign of the end of communications. If you feel the silence is too long you could recap what has been already said.

Even in the urban environments many Aboriginal people still have English as a second or third language, this is more common with our Elders. Sometimes you may need to slow down and speak clearly, not speak as if the client is dumb, just clear and concise. Remember English is not the first language of a lot of people.

When seeking to identify a client, do not ask if someone is ATSI...This is rude; ask if they are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Explain why you are asking and what you need the information for.

In some Aboriginal cultures it is a sign of rudeness to look someone in the eye. Eye to eye contact is something that needs to be earned. It is a sign of respect to not look an Elder in the eye. This is not uncommon with many other societies around the world. If unsure, ask the patient. Sitting by the side of a patient can be a good way out of this, of just follow the lead of the patient.

Pointing is also a big no- no, you will find that most Aboriginal people use facial expressions, nod of the head to point and when pointing with the hand the index finger is bent. So if you must use your fingers to point, bend it.

Handshaking means you are encroaching on the space of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person who probably hasn't identified or connected with you as yet. Touching on the upper arms is inappropriate, and if you handshake, start of with a loose hand shake. Not a hard firm grasp.

The identity of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is not in their skin colour, it is in their connection with the Indigenous Community. Judging someone Aboriginality based on the darkness of their skin is insulting, and brings in your own prejudices. Aboriginal People within a community are acknowledged by their tribe or nation.

There are terms that cover a wide range of peoples within one area:

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Koorie/Koori | The Aboriginal people from New South Wales and Victoria |
| Goorie | The Aboriginal people Northern New South Wales, and South East Queensland |
| Murri | The Aboriginal people from Queensland. |
| Palawa | The Aboriginal people from Tasmania |
| Noongar | The Aboriginal people from West Australia |
| Nunga | The Aboriginal people from South Australia |

DATES TO REMEMBER:

26 January – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people choose to mark this day to highlight the invasion of Australia by Europeans and the continuing survival of the people and the cultures.

13 February – Apology to the Stolen Generations by the Australian Parliament

26 May – Sorry Day National Day of Healing, this marks the anniversary of the “Bringing Them Home” Report

27 May – Marks the anniversary of the referendum held in 1967

26 May -3 June – National Reconciliation Week

1 June – Coming of the light, this marks the anniversary of the introduction of Christianity to the Torres Strait.

3 June – Mabo Day commemorates the anniversary of the 1992 High Court Decision on the case by Eddie “Koki” Mabo and others.

July – NAIDOC Week, is celebrated in the first full week of July

4 August - National Aboriginal and Islander Children’s day was established by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care.

9 August - International Day for the Worlds Indigenous People. A Day set by the United Nations that recognises the history, culture, languages, rights and aspirations of the Indigenous Peoples of the world.

TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITIES

Sorry BusinessThe time from when someone dies and a mourning period. (This can differ from mob to mob)

Stolen Generations.....The Children who were forcibly removed from their families and taken to institutions due to past government policies.

Mission/Community.....The Missions were first established in the early 19th Century as a place to Christianise Aboriginal People. Governments then took over the running of them and they became Missions or Reserves. Whole Tribes of people were taken from their lands and forced to live in these reserves. Many families were split up and sent to different Missions.

The Act.....The Queensland Aboriginals protection and the sale of opium act 1905. This is the legislation that allowed successive governments to force families on to Missions and reserves split up families and remove children. Many people grew up under this act; it is still a nightmare to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today.

COMMON WORDS TO KNOW

Fella (fulla)
fulla’s)

Man/ man (except groups of mixed sex can be

Mob

A group of people or family. (who your mob? = What tribe or family) A way to link a person to others by country, family or organisation.

Longtime

Months or years

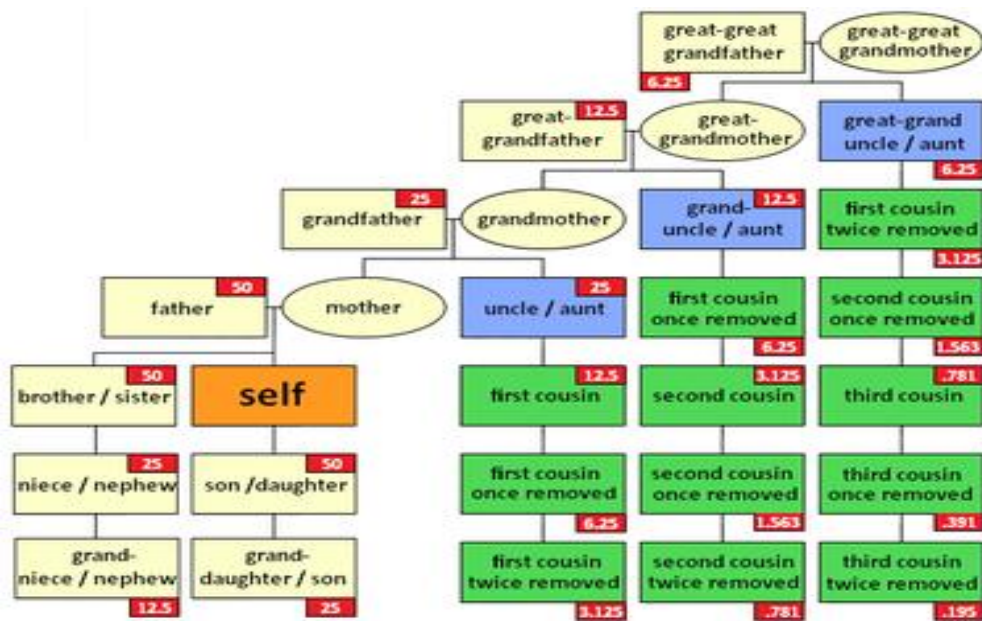
| | | |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Knock off | | Stop, cut it out. |
| Gammin | Can be a verb or adjective. Means pretend. Used in 3 main ways. To lie, deceive, Joke, muck around, tease or Bad. | |
| Humbug | | pester especially to bother with, especially with inane and annoying questions |
| Run amok crazy | | impulsive running wild acting |
| Grog | | Alcohol |
| Grog sick | | Ill from too much alcohol |
| Goom Goomie | Cheap wine (used to be a mixture of wine or port and Metho) An alcoholic (see above) | |
| Yandi, Ganja, Mardi | | Marijuana |
| Weak Spirit/Spirit Weak | | Depressed or down |
| Strong Spirit/Spirit Strong | | Healthy, with a sense of well being, also strong in culture and family. |
| Feed/Tucker | | Food |
| Look out | | Disbelief |
| Shut Up | | Silly Me |
| Shame/ Shamejob | | Something embarrassing |
| Talking rubbish/rubbish talking | | not making sense, talking foolishly |
| Deadly | | Very good |
| Womba | | Silly head |
| Mindah | | Silly head |
| Binung Jinna/Jinnung | | Ear Foot |

WORDS AND TERMINOLOGY THAT SHOULD NOT BE USED

ATSI
 Native
 Black
 Coloured

Abo
 Mixed Blood
 Half Caste
 Quarter Caste
 Full Blood
 Part Aboriginal
 Percentages, e.g. 25% or 50% Aboriginal
 Them as in us and them
 Those People eg those people have asked us to
 You people eg you people have health problems....
 Your Kind e.g. your kind often suffers from...
 With blonde hair and green eyes, just how Aboriginal can they be...

NON INDIGENOUS KINSHIP



Aboriginal Kinship System

