

THE ROLE OF HEALTH CHECKS IN IMPROVING ABORIGINAL HEALTH

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Indigenous-specific EPC items

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Adult Health Check Item 710 (2004)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Health Check item 708 (2006)

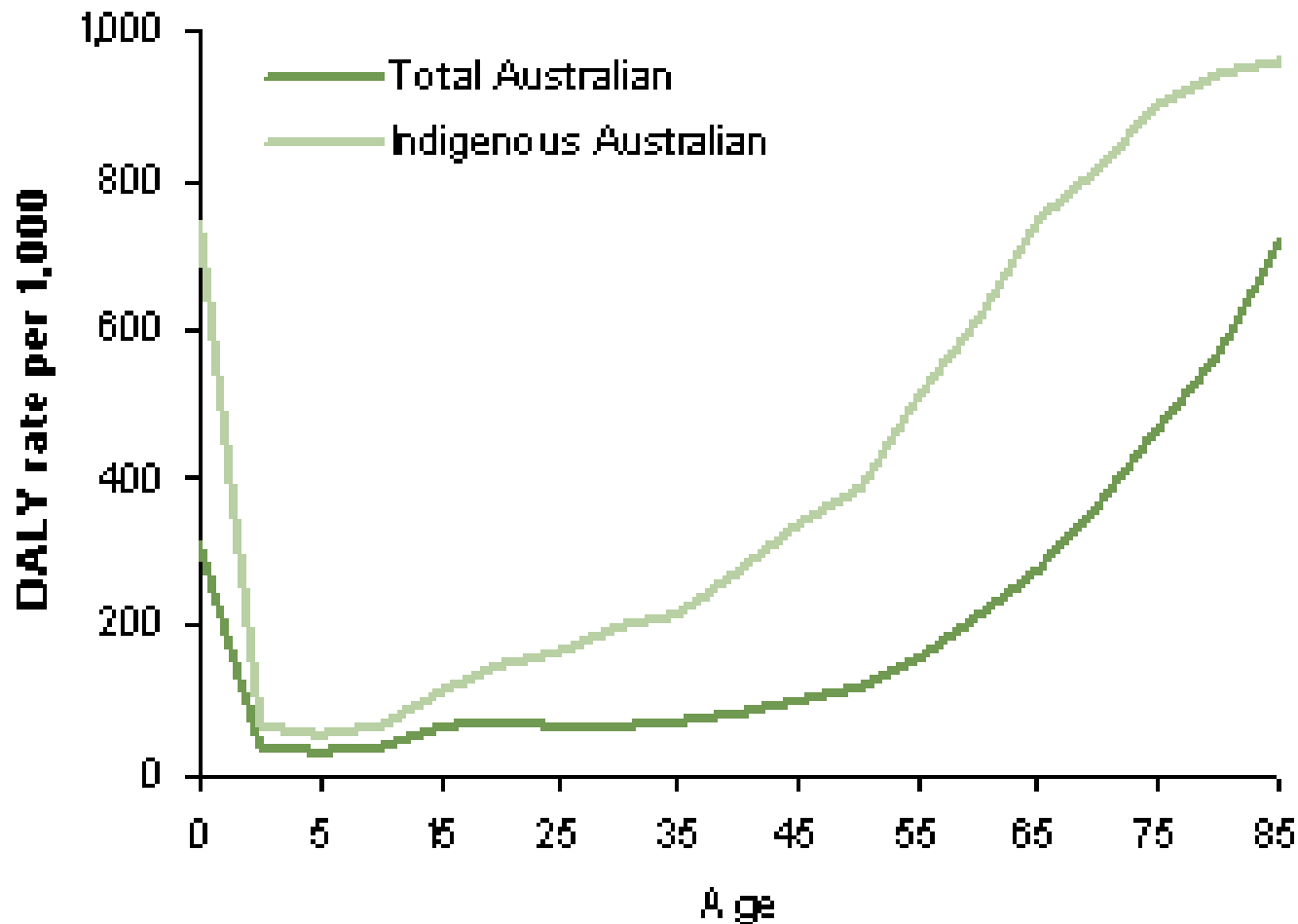
Screening: definition

- the presumptive identification of unrecognised disease or defects by the application of tests, examinations or other procedures which can be applied rapidly .

Characteristics of diseases suitable for screening

- Early therapy gives better results than late therapy;
- Slow but progressive natural history;
- Effects of disease are major;
- Prevalence is high;
- Reliable, valid, acceptable screening test is available;
- Appropriate follow-up and therapy is available.

Burden of disease across the life-span (Source: Vos et al 2007)



Significant health conditions in Aboriginal children

- Acute infections;
- Failure-to-thrive;
- Foetal alcohol spectrum disorder;
- Otitis media;
- Dental problems;
- Trachoma;
- Rheumatic fever/rheumatic heart disease;
- Asthma;
- Trauma;
- Behavioural/mental health issues;
- Child protection issues.
- *Adolescents:* Behavioural/mental health issues; Drug and alcohol issues; STIs; lifestyle issues.

Significant health conditions in Aboriginal adults

- Adult chronic disease (hypertension, obesity, dyslipidaemia, diabetes, coronary heart disease, renal disease)
- Dental problems
- Tobacco, alcohol, other drugs, other addictions
- Chronic pain
- Mental health
- STIs/BBVs
- Rheumatic Heart Disease
- Asthma/COAD
- Eye and ear problems
- Cancer: cervical, breast, bowel, skin

Adult chronic disease

- BMI, waist circumference;
- BP;
- BSL, HbA1c
- Lipid profile
- Urinalysis, ACR
- Smoking status

...AND FOLLOW-UP

STIs/BBVs

- If sexually active: PCR chlamydia and gonorrhoea
- Should be aware of hep A and hep B status
- If any IV drug use currently or in the past: check hep C status
- HIV, syphilis

Eye and ear problems (1)

Eye problems:

- Refraction problems
- Cataracts
- Diabetic retinopathy
- Trichiasis

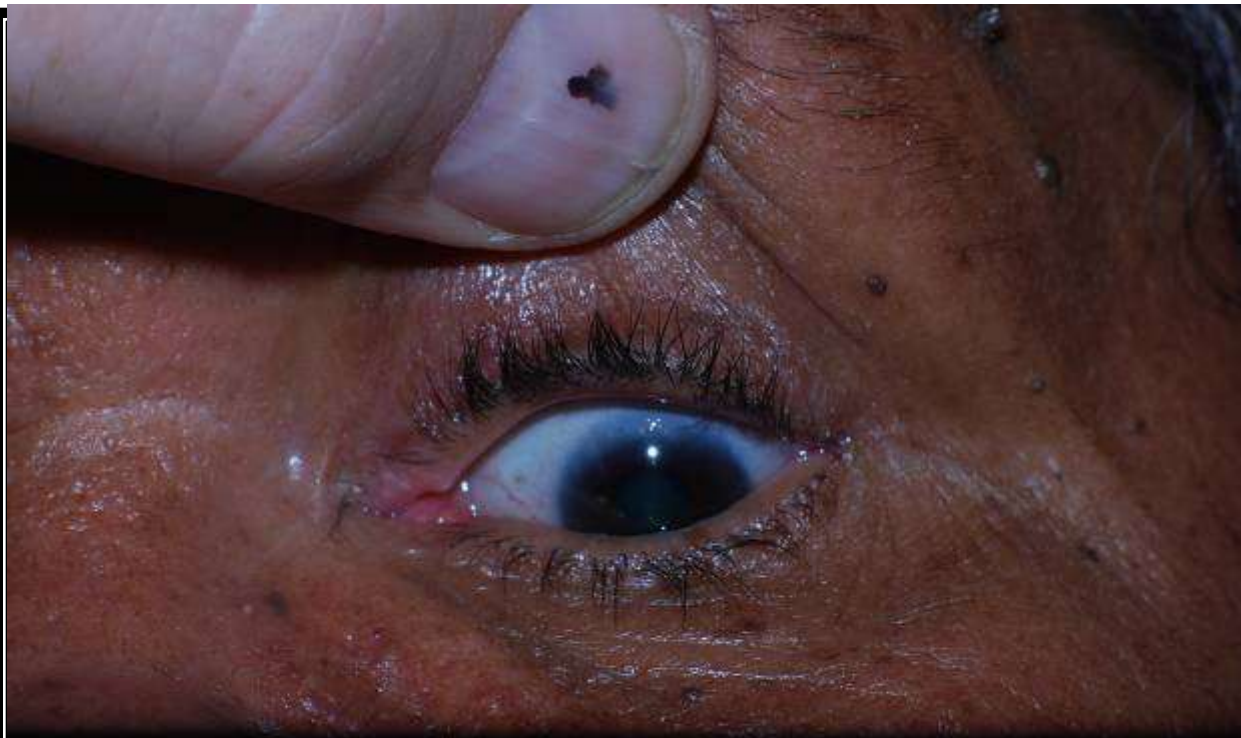
Ear problems:

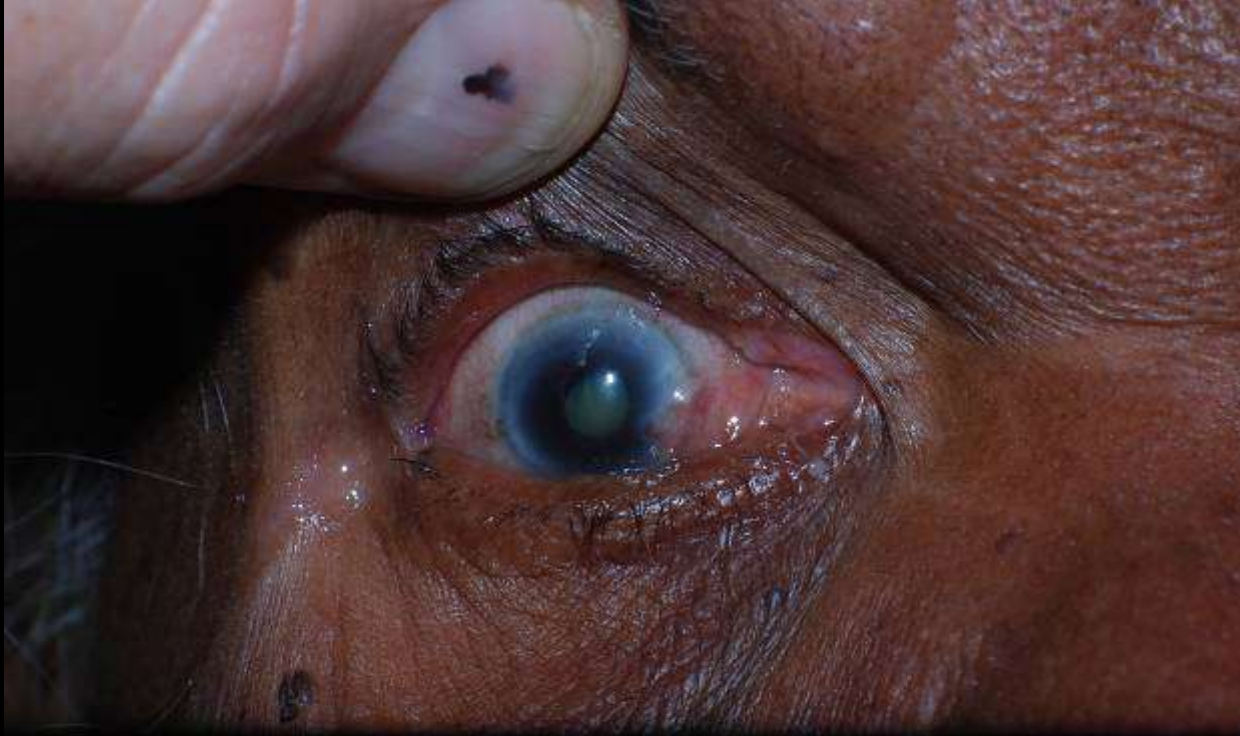
- Perforated eardrums
- Other causes of hearing loss

Eye and ear problems (2)

- Visual acuity
- Look at the eyes
- The 3 T's: *Think, Thumb, Torch*
- Look in the ears
- Hearing test.









Screening for cancer

- Cervical cancer: Pap smear every 2 years for women who have ever been sexually active (Commencing at 18-20 or 1-2 years after first SI)
- Breast Cancer: Mammogram every 2 years in women >50
- Bowel cancer: FOBT every 2 years 50-75
- Skin cancer: Skin check
- Prostate cancer: Routine screening not recommended

Conclusions

- Health checks are an important component of comprehensive primary health care for Aboriginal people;
- Not all health problems will be improved through undertaking regular health checks;
- Adult health checks achieve more health outcomes than child health checks;
- There is a need to develop a specific adolescent health check;
- Health checks are useless unless properly followed-up;
- What is most important is that all Aboriginal people of all ages have access to culturally secure comprehensive primary health care