

Introduction

The Provision of Eye Health and Equipment Training Project is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health. A consortium of five organisations from across Australia is working in partnership to deliver this project based on their existing links and experience in Indigenous eye care, in discussions with local and regional stakeholders, and service providers. These organisations are: Brien Holden Foundation, Australian College of Optometry, Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia, Centre for Eye Health and Optometry Australia.



Project period - April 2017 to June 2021

Goal

To procure and distribute non-mydriatic (without pupil dilation) retinal cameras and slit lamps where required to primary health care (PHC) services who provide care to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. Training on using the camera will be delivered to the PHC teams, including Aboriginal health workers, nurses, diabetes educators, general practitioners and any other relevant personnel.

Purpose

The Project aims to support uptake of the new Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) items for *Assessment of visual acuity and bilateral retinal photography with a non-mydriatic retinal camera* for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (12325) and non-Indigenous Australians (12326). The cameras aim to enable primary-level access to a retinal photograph for people with diabetes, triggering referrals for a comprehensive eye examination or treatment where required. A retinal photograph does not replace a comprehensive eye examination. An added benefit of the cameras is that they can also be used by the visiting eye practitioners (optometrists and ophthalmologists).

Selection of sites

The Fred Hollows Foundation conducted the *National Eye Care Equipment Inventory Project* during 2016 to catalogue existing eye care equipment in PHC facilities providing care for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. Using this information, the Department will identify the sites to receive a retinal camera and training on its use.

Choice and delivery of cameras

Decision on the type/model of non-mydriatic retinal camera chosen was based on the Department's list of essential requirements via a competitive tendering process addressing key selection criteria. This is the Canon CR2-AF non-mydriatic retinal camera. The Australian College of Optometry leads the procurement and organisation of the camera distribution to selected sites. Each location takes ownership of the camera (3 year warranty is included), confirmed in writing via a Recipient Service Agreement made with Brien Holden Vision Foundation (as the project contractor).

Training

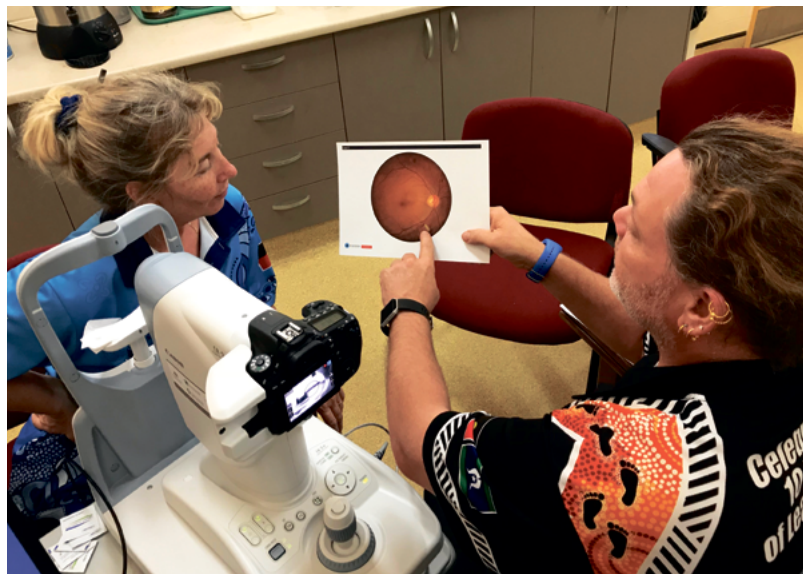
To support the uptake of retinal photography, the Consortium has developed two training courses, which are accredited by key organisations representing the PHC workers. The Consortium has also developed an embedding toolkit which will be introduced into health services prior to completion of the project. The on-site training component of Course 1 will be delivered by local lead trainer alongside a co-trainer, such as a chronic disease coordinator, diabetes educator, eye health coordinator, or similar, nominated by each health service. This co-training approach aims to build local capacity for ongoing up-skilling on retinal photography. Wherever possible, a follow-up mentoring and upskilling session will be delivered by the visiting optometrist to that location. An outline of the training is as follows:

<p>Course 1</p> <p>Retinal Camera Training for Primary Health Care Workers</p>	<p>2 hours online – [BHVI Education]</p> <p>1 day face-to-face training – [Consortium members plus local co-trainer]</p> <p>1 day mentoring/upskilling – [Consortium member or visiting optometrist]</p>
<p>Course 2</p> <p>Diabetic Retinopathy Assessment: A Training Course</p>	<p>2 hours online – [Centre For Eye Health <i>Learning For Vision</i>]</p> <p>Reading Service – [Centre For Eye Health]</p>
<p>Course 3</p> <p>Slit Lamp</p>	<p>From June 2020, slit lamps will be distributed to sites.</p>
<p>Course 4</p> <p>Embedding Retinal Cameras into Practice</p>	<p>Tool kits will be distributed to all health services that participated in retinal camera training. Pull-up banners and other advertising materials to promote diabetic retinopathy screening in health services.</p>

Project expansion

The Australian Government has granted a funding extension for the project, increasing the number of sites across Australia to receive eye health equipment and training. As of December 2019 the Consortium have trained 132 sites (753 trainees) for Course 1 and 164 health practitioners/workers into Course 2.

The program extension also funds the design and delivery of a new educational course aimed at embedding the retinal cameras into existing health services. This includes workshops with key stakeholders and health service staff who play a role in integrating the new process into their practice as well as the development of diabetic retinopathy screening advertisement materials.



Conferences

The Consortium has supported presentations and workshops regarding the project held at various Conferences: 2019 Close the Gap for Vision National Conference in Alice Springs, 2019 NACCHO National Conference in Darwin, and the 2019 Rural GPs Conference. Abstracts have been accepted for presentations by ACCHO health workers from 4 sites to be presented at the 2020 Close the Gap for Vision National Conference in Adelaide.

November 2018 Workshop

The Consortium held a 2 day workshop to discuss how best to embed retinal photography in primary health care processes. This workshop was predominantly Indigenous led with 56 participants representing 37 organisations across Australia. A wealth of knowledge and ideas were exchanged all which highlighted key areas to focus on for the future development of the project. A variety of stakeholders including peak body representatives, ACCHOs/primary health care representatives from each jurisdiction, Aboriginal Health Workers, GPs, consortium partners and optometrists were brought together, which led to a rich and diverse mix of ideas.

Any questions?

Please direct any questions, comments, project feedback and future ideas for sustainability around this project to: Colina Waddell, Australia Project Manager – c.waddell@bhvi.org

Up-to-date information on camera delivery and training progress can be found [here](#).