

## Checking for diabetes in high-risk young people is important but challenging

### Why was this study done?

- Type 2 diabetes is too much sugar/glucose in the blood and is responsible for a lot of sickness in the Kimberley. If you have diabetes you may get very sick. You may need to go onto a machine (kidney problems), you may get eye problems, you may get feet problems, you may get heart problems.
- Most people do not know they have diabetes, and therefore it is important to check for it.
- Diabetes in young people (under 25) is a bad type of diabetes and leads to problems much faster than if you get diabetes when you are older.
- From 2015, HbA<sub>1c</sub> tests have been used instead of lab blood sugar tests to check for diabetes in Kimberley adults. HbA<sub>1c</sub> tests are quicker and easier than lab blood sugar tests as you only have to do one test and it doesn't matter if you have eaten anything, so it can be done straight away.
- To check for diabetes in Kimberley young people aged 10-14, the more complicated blood sugar/glucose tests were still being used. We wanted to know if using HbA<sub>1c</sub> tests would improve checking for diabetes in young people.

### How was this study done?

- Two sites took part in this study (an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS), and a Regional Hospital), as well as remote clinics covered by these sites.
- We developed a better way to check for diabetes for 10-14 year olds – we added HbA<sub>1c</sub> tests, and asked staff at the two sites to try this out for 6-months. While all adults should be checked for diabetes each year, we asked staff to only check for diabetes in 10-14 year olds who had a high risk of having diabetes.
- To find out whether this change resulted in more 10-14 year olds being checked for diabetes, we looked at the number of people that had tests done during the 6 month period after the new test and compared this to an earlier 6-month period. We also asked staff what they thought of the new way of checking for diabetes.

### What did we find?

- Checking for diabetes increased a lot at the ACCHS, where nurses and Aboriginal Health Workers do an initial assessment of people before they see a doctor.
- Lots of people (staff and patients) were worried about checking for diabetes in 10-14 year olds, as they did not want to hurt them.

### What does this mean?

- Checking for diabetes in 10-14 year olds that have a high risk of having diabetes is important.
- This study has given us ideas on what we need to do to improve checking for diabetes in 10-14 year olds. We will take these into account when we update the current advice on checking for diabetes in this age group.

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This study was a joint project between Kimberley Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, WA Country Health Service and the Rural Clinical School of Western Australia.

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