



Issue: Men's Ceremonial Business – Clinical Protocol

Raised by: Various individuals; Management request; Previous incidents

Background: Men's ceremonial business occurs annually in indigenous communities throughout the Northern Territory. Remote Health clinical staff are at times called on to provide health care to initiates involved in ceremonial law. While staff utilise [authorised clinical protocols](#) and [medical consultations](#) in a routine capacity during such care, there are some unique aspects relating to ceremonial business proceedings that indicate a dedicated protocol would be of value to assist provision of appropriate care.

An Atlas item ([Men's Business – Central Australia](#)) has previously been released which describes the relationship between Remote Health and Men's ceremonial business events. However, finalisation of a standard treatment protocol has remained outstanding to date.

Discussion: Various considerations have significant impact on this topic and the development of a suitable treatment protocol. These considerations include, but are not limited to:

- Respect for ensuring privacy of ceremonial business from all those not directly involved; in particular the requirement to ensure female involvement is distinctly avoided wherever possible. (Most importantly this relates to visiting ceremonial camps, but may also involve less direct interactions such as handling of ceremonial kits, seeing clients for health checks pre and post ceremony, etc.)
- Appropriateness of what can be described in relation to ceremonial business
- Differing practices and expectations in different geographical and cultural areas
- Foreknowledge of when and where ceremonial business is to occur, and who will be involved
- Widespread use of practices which are not clinically supported (e.g. inappropriate use of Bicillin in treatment of infections, invasive procedures being performed by non registered or trained clinicians, etc)

The above considerations and sensitivities themselves add weight to the need to make available treatment protocols that ensure staff safety on legal, cultural and clinical fronts. Considerable consultation has occurred to produce guidance that is balanced in each regard, yet is suitable for the context. Clinicians, indigenous men and management have all contributed to the development of the [Men's Ceremonial Business – Clinical Protocol](#).

Significantly, the developed protocol places an onus on clinicians to acknowledge and respect the context, and to provide health care in an appropriate manner.

Consultation: Representation from: Health Development (male health workers); CAAC – Men's Health; Public Health Medical Officers; CDC Medical Officers; RDH Infectious Diseases Team; Remote Health (male AHWs, male RANs, Medical Officers, Quality & Safety Team).

References: Atlas item: [Men's Business – Central Australia](#);

[Evaluation of a Safer Male Circumcision Training Programme for Traditional Surgeons and Nurses in the Eastern Cape, South Africa](#)

[Complications of Circumcision Performed within and Outside the Hospital](#)

Outcome: A [Men's Ceremonial Business – Clinical Protocol](#) is now the authorised clinical protocol for applicable situations, for all Remote Health Branch clinical staff.

The protocol will be included in the Remote Health Additional Clinical Protocols folder.