



On Track Watch | Throat Swabbing Day at Yilpara

The On Track Watch team at Baniyala Homeland in North East Arnhem Land recently held a successful Strep A “Swabbing Day” at the Baniyala Garangali School. The day was the community’s first introduction to the throat swabbing component of OTW. We are swabbing throats for the presence of Strep A using Alere rapid tests which provide an on the spot result. A second swab can be sent to a lab to confirm the Alere test result. Our Community Based Researchers (CBRs) and Project Coordinator have been working with the community, clinic and school for the better part of 2017 to increase awareness of OTW its goals¹ and aims², including testing for Strep A.

Engaging community and increasing community awareness of ARF/RHD

This is the Swabbing Story as told by the CBRs. The story demonstrates how far our CBRs have come in terms of their training and their understanding of Acute Rheumatic Fever (ARF) and Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD). The day also reminded us that the community’s knowledge about ARF and RHD transmission is very limited and that more community-level education is needed. OTW can really help to raise parents and children’s knowledge about these preventable diseases and support them to take steps to better manage treatment for those already living with RHD and to prevent further cases.

Why do tests for the presence of streptococci?

- To provide a means to educate about streptococcal infection and the link with ARF
- To determine feasibility in this setting
- To inform future plans about
 - o Performance of rapid tests in the NT setting
 - o School-based active case detection
 - o Potential for such tests to eventually inform treatment decisions (with antimicrobial stewardship implications)
- To provide skills for the Certificate 2 training (consent, documentation, specimen handling)

Community-based Researchers talk about the Swabbing Day at Yilpara/Baniyala

Research

1. We learned about research:

- We talked about the *Lipalipa*³ and doing two way research.
- We watched videos about doing research – eg the “Dilly Bag” ARPNet research tools video.
- We networked with other Yolŋu researchers, e.g. Waka from Laynha and Lawurrpa from Yalu.

¹ Goals

- Build a local research workforce and empower local residents in CBPR methods
- Foster an ARF/RHD-literate community
- Improve the prevention, detection and management of ARF and antecedent streptococcal infections

² Aims

- Undertake school-based active case finding for streptococcal throat and skin infections;
- Test streptococcal rapid antigen detection tests in the community setting;
- Determine the prevalence of throat carriage or infection with GAS among individuals with skin sores;
- Compare the incidence of throat and skin infections in the baseline period (12 months preceding commencement of the study) with the intervention period (12 months from start of active case finding).

³ a metaphor based on people in a canoe going fishing that made a clear picture about doing research



- We talked about research ethics and consent in both *balanda* (non-Indigenous) and *Yolju rom*⁴
- We did role plays and then a practice focus group about watching out for and taking care of skin sores and sore throats.

Getting the message out

2. We learned about germs and how to talk about germs with other people:
 - We watched video in Yolju matha about scientists (for example, Pasteur) discovering germs and antibiotics
 - We did role plays - Practicing telling people information about skin sores, sore throats, rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease
 - We gave presentations at Yilpara, Darwin and GanGan
 - We made posters - eg about being clean and watching for sores
 - We drew the manymak / yakka manymak dhukarr⁵ for RHD
 - We have translated information into Djambarrpuyngu and Dhuwaya (Yolju Matha languages)
 - We added film of the (Yilpara Health Worker introducing the Take Heart video and gave the movie to all Yilpara families on a USB.

Planning

3. How we did the Swabbing Day:
 - We spent time planning how to do the swabbing – role play in groups of 3 about explaining about rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease and then getting the consent form signed and filling in the data collection forms
 - We sent out invitations to homes and we made a community announcement over the PA
 - We talked about how to clearly explain and feel confident in explaining why we were swabbing
 - We gave the school some videos about RHD and they showed these at morning assembly; Trainees talked to the children.

Swabbing Day

4. Who came to Swabbing Day:
 - There were 10 children
 - There were 16 parents
 - There were 12 OTW researchers
 - A total of 38 people
 - There were about 80 people in Yilpara at the time – this means about half (50%) of the community came to the swabbing day.
5. What happened at Swabbing Day:
 - Some people had to wait a long time but they still stayed the whole time
 - People came and stayed because they were interested (not because we had food or a gift for the children)
 - Quote from a CBR - yesterday the people in the Lipalipa “caught lots of small fish”

Results from the swabbing day

6. What we found out:
 - All 10 children had negative swabs, one child said she had a sore throat and that was treated
 - All children had a second swab that has been sent to a laboratory

⁴ *Yolju Rom*: Yolju law

⁵ Good / not good pathway



- As researchers we collected both quantitative (number) and qualitative (story) information
- We put the information in an excel spreadsheet and analysed it to find numbers of boys and girls (4 and 6) and range of ages (3 to 18).
- We learnt that people didn't realise the germs are just there, they thought they came from a long way, but they are living here.

Reflection

7. What went well:

- There was good team work – researchers saw what needed to be done and did it – for example checking forms were filled in correctly; helping Waka with the swabbing; organising who was seen next; supporting the children
- The school was very supportive
- Parents thought it was important that their children were swabbed, a child not at school came from home.
- Community showed a lot of interest
- It was good for the researchers to get involved and good for the community to see that we are trying to help and so community got involved
- Good to have Laynha come and help with the swabbing, we need to work closely with them supporting the local health workers.

8. What we could do better:

- Introduce visiting researchers – Lawurrpa, Waka and trainers Jodi and Clarissa
- Take photos or videos
- Show the video about germs (the antibiotic story)
- Check more carefully for skin sores (we are not sure if we missed any)
- Give more health information while people are interested
- Take it in turns explaining health information to parents and children.

9. What did we learn from doing this activity?

- Scientific words
- Ethics – learning in both ways – sharing our own knowledge, skills and feelings about ethics and putting Yolŋu (*Gurrutu*) and *Balanda Rom* together
- “Looking through our own thoughts about how to run the project gives us more understanding about how to run projects in the future”
- Everyone worked together as a team – different people are good at different things
- For example, Linda is a special person to help us in the Yolŋu way of thinking, helping with Yolŋu Matha translations
- Yolŋu and *Balanda* combine, sharing knowledge together, talking together, sharing ideas
- Learning about the Problem-Plan-Do-Review cycle and using it in other areas of life.
- It is a new thing that Yolŋu are learning to know about germs
- Now we know about Strep A and the disease it causes.

10. What we got out of doing this activity:

- “Doing this project made me feel good, it is very clear about research.”
- “I feel very strong now about taking care of djamarkuli.”
- It was a new experience for Yilpara, and we will go to other places and teach them, keep on going!
- “It changed my life, on that day I was amazed, I felt really happy.” (OTW Researcher)



- “What I got out of it personally was learning about the Problem-Plan-Do-Review cycle and using it in other areas of my life.” (OTW Researcher)

Project Partners

11. Who we worked with:

- Yilpara Community leaders
- Laynha health
- Miwatj Employment Program (MEP)
- Children in Schools program (Laynha)
- Laynha Rangers
- Yilpara School
- Yilpara clinic (Laynha)

Feedback

12. Who we would like to report to about the day:

- Yilpara community – the families and children who came
- Djambawa Marawili (Yilpara Traditional Owner & OTW Investigator)
- Other Homelands/Laynhapuy (newsletter)
- Darwin researchers (report)
- The *Yalu* researchers at Galiwinku (presentation)
- Conferences⁶

Next

13. More community education:

- Next - we would like scientists to come and tell us about the different types of germs – the names of different germs
 - For example the *Manna*⁷ contains different names for different parts – we would like to know the other names
 - This is like knowing that different bait live in different places and catch different fish eg small bait at *Dhuruputjpi* catches cat fish
 - It will give Yolŋu knowledge to see and understand how the germs live in peoples’ bodies
 - People would like to know what effect germs have in people’s bodies

14. More training:

- We would like a project about training for Leadership, strong community and jobs
- VET training for students through the school
- Work experience with people working, for example with the Health Worker at the clinic
- We would like train-the-trainer training, and more on-the-job training as co-researchers with other researchers.

⁶ 2 OTW Researchers have been sponsored by the NT Dept. Health to attend the 13th Annual ADMA Conference and 21st Chronic Diseases Network NT Conference in September. The OTW Project Coordinator and 2 OTW Researchers are presenting at the 6th Annual NHMRC Symposium on Research Translation co-hosted with the Lowitja Institute in Brisbane on the 14 & 15 November.

⁷ Shark