



Media release

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MEDIA RELEASE

Aboriginal health workers join RPH

NEW Royal Perth Hospital employees Tyra Thomas and Dallas Yarran are part of pilot program to attract more Aboriginal people to the hospital system.

Tyra, from Banksia Grove, has started working in cardiac rehabilitation and Dallas, from Maddington, is part of the renal dialysis team.

The women joined RPH in December 2006 as part of a pilot employment program aimed to boost the number of Aboriginal Health Workers in the hospital.

Dallas, originally from Quairading, said she was relishing her new role.

"I spend time with Aboriginal patients who are having dialysis and this gives me an opportunity to build up a trusting relationship with them," she said.

"These people come from many different parts of WA and the difference in culture, language groups and religious beliefs can be barriers in getting the best treatment.

"By talking to the patients and getting to know their particular cultures, I'm able to bring cultural awareness to the ward staff."

Dallas said patients felt more comfortable talking with her about their health.

"I can then promote healthy lifestyle changes that are particularly important for people on dialysis," she said.

The new health workers were recruited through the efforts of RPH Director of Nursing Patricia Tibbett, Nursing Director Maha Rajagopal and Business Manager, Medical Specialties Division Godfrey Leung.

Cardiac rehabilitation and renal therapy were targeted because both departments have a high number of Aboriginal patients.

Ms Rajagopal said the WA Office of Aboriginal Health and the Health Promotion Directorate believed that successfully improving health in Aboriginal communities included the training of Aboriginal Health Workers.

“Royal Perth Hospital (RPH) has recognised the high use of health services by Aboriginal people and by appointing these two health workers we can provide more culturally appropriate care,” she said.

“For our Aboriginal patients, the health worker is another person in the health system who can understand them.

“A lot of the patients who come here from rural areas can miss their home, their family and social network and these workers will help fill that void.

“Research carried out in the Northern Territory in 2006 has shown that employing Aboriginal Health Workers is independently associated with improved diabetes care in remote communities. AHWs provide essential services as cross-cultural brokers in the Aboriginal health setting.”