

Under the Microscope with Professor Flicker

A team of RPH doctors is conducting a study into the health needs of older Indigenous Australians, which has never been conducted in Australia.

The team, led by Dr Dina Logiudice from National Aging Research Institute, includes Professor of Geriatric Medicine, Leon Flicker and a team of RPH and Kimberley professionals.

The team is investigating the prevalence of “geriatric” problems in Aboriginals aged over 45 years, living in the Kimberley.

The study, a first study of its kind in Australia, follows the development of an assessment tool designed by the team to measure cognition, or mental status, of older Indigenous Australians.

The assessment tool, named the Kimberley Indigenous Cognitive Assessment tool (KICA) utilises specific questions and other assessment methods, to gauge a person’s memory and other brain functioning.

“When we first began our research, there was no effective way of assessing the cognitive or mental status of older Aboriginal people living in remote areas,” Prof Flicker said.

“There was also no research into the health needs of the older Aboriginal Australians living in remote parts of Australia.”

The development of the KICA was the result of a grant of \$200 000 as part of the Healthy Ageing Grants Scheme from National Health and Medical Research Council. (NHMRC)

Following another grant of over \$240,000 from the NHMRC, the second stage of research, called the “Prevalence Survey”, uses the KICA and other assessment tools to gauge the prevalence of general health needs of Aboriginal Australians.

This includes memory problems, falls, depression, incontinence diabetes and heart disease.

“We hope that this research will help guide the development of culturally appropriate health services for older Indigenous people.” Prof Flicker said.