

# RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

## Measurement Matters for Indigenous Children

Dr Anthony Dillon from the Centre for Educational Research has been awarded a prestigious Indigenous Australian Research Fellowship, with mentoring from Professor Rhonda Craven, Dr Gawiain Bodkin-Andrews, and Associate Professor Alex Yeung, to explore issues around using medication for children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and bias in assessing Indigenous children displaying ADHD behaviours. This research is funded by the Australian Research Council Discovery Indigenous Researchers Development scheme.

'Controversy has raged over the value of medication in treating ADHD, and the potential for mislabelling Indigenous children displaying ADHD type behaviours,' says Dr Dillon. 'Research has suggested that the nature of survey questions to explore this issue may give biased results regarding the appropriateness of medication as a treatment option. This opens up questions of discrimination in both the diagnosis and treatment of ADHD in Indigenous children; a matter that has not been explored through research to date. This project seeks to fill this gap to investigate possible biases in assessment of medical treatments for ADHD from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders.'

Dr Dillon will survey parents, student teachers, student doctors, and student psychologists to gauge their views on the nature and causes of ADHD and the impact of drug interventions for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. Survey participants may also be asked to watch two short films with actors depicting a child with ADHD before and after medication, and then asked their opinions regarding medication. Results will be analysed to tease out bias in approaches to ADHD treatment. Differences in how viewers judged behaviours based on whether the child depicted in the films was



Indigenous or non-Indigenous will also be quantified.

This research will address Australia's National Research Priority for promoting and maintaining good health, by strengthening Australia's social and economic fabric and providing a healthy start to life. The project is expected to deliver important social benefits for understanding the nature and impact of medicating for ADHD, particularly for Indigenous Australian children.

**Project Title:** Measurement Matter: Analysis of potential methodological and discrimination biases in assessment of medical treatments for ADHD and stakeholder views

**Funding has been set at:** \$300,401

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