

Working in a Culturally Competent manner with South Asian Communities

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What is Culture?

- ▶ **What is culture?**
 - Culture implies the integrated pattern of human attitudes and behaviours that includes **thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of a racial, ethnic, faith or social group.**


Impact of Culture on Health

- ▶ Health – Wellness and Illness beliefs
- ▶ Prevention versus treatment
- ▶ Grief and Dying
- ▶ Help Seeking Behaviours
- ▶ Role of Family
- ▶ Role of Community
- ▶ Verbal & Non-Verbal communications
- ▶ Social Relationships


DIRECT IMPACT

INDIRECT IMPACT


Cultural Competence – a definition

- ▶ **Culture Competence is the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, systems, practices and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services and care, thereby producing better outcomes (Davis, 1997).**
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Critical Issues and Behaviors Affected By Culture

- ▶ Patterns of decision making
 - ▶ Social interaction
 - Time, proximity, non-verbal, formal and informal dialogue, when is No a NO,
 - ▶ Patterns of handling emotions
 - Expression of pain and suffering
 - ▶ Definition of mental illness
 - ▶ Theory of disease
 - Scientific versus traditional
 - ▶ Roles, expectations, obligations, in relation to age, sex, class, kinship
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What Is Cultural Competence?

- Willingness to adapt or adjust the way one works to take into consideration cultural differences
 - Basic knowledge of a client's culture
 - Understanding that culture affects the way people behave, communicate, and problem solve
 - Awareness of own cultural values, awareness of and acceptance of cultural difference
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Components of Cultural Competence

▶ Components of Cultural Competence

- **Skills**

- Engaging the client
- Building trust
- Making an assessment
- Contracting treatment
- Discharging

- **Values**

- Preferences,
- beliefs,
- stereotypes

- **Knowledge**

- How does political history affect life, values, beliefs of the client?
- Other .. Poverty, gender, abilities, age etc

Five essential elements of cultural competence

- ▶ Assessing cultural knowledge
 - What you **know about others**, your reactions to others, what you need to do to **become effective**
- ▶ Valuing diversity
 - Making effort to be **inclusive** (decision making and problem solving)
- ▶ Managing the dynamics of difference
 - Viewing **conflict as natural and normal**, change needs to happen
- ▶ Adapting to diversity
 - Having the will to **learn** about others
- ▶ Institutionalizing cultural knowledge
 - **Learning and changing** becomes an **integral part** of the institution

Difference Between Culturally Appropriate and Culturally Sensitive Service

- ▶ Within culturally appropriate work, clients have a worldview and professionals need to adjust their philosophy, way of work and service delivery to suit their clients' needs.
- ▶ Within culturally sensitive work, clients adjust their worldview and help seeking behaviours to suit the service delivery arrangements and intervention modalities of the professionals.

Culturally Appropriate

Culturally Sensitive

Barriers

- ▶ What are the barriers?
 - Client reaches out to professional – why?
 - Abused women reaching out to food banks with small children in winter
 - Why can't staff go to the clients to help?
 - Client centered services versus agency centred services
 - The agency opens and closes at agency's schedule
 - The duration of the counselling is defined by the agency
 - The intervention approach is defined by the agency (form filling, engaging a client)
 - Form versus content
 - E.g., who speaks (the person with some credibility) and what is spoken (the topic is culturally accepted) is **more important** than how is spoken (with or without electronic media) but with mainstream agencies – there seems to be a fascination with developing a “perfect” power point.

Barriers cont...

- Hard to reach community versus professionals having difficulty reaching out
 - Community's are not hard to reach rather professionals have difficulty reaching out to the community
- Help Seeking Behaviours
 - Wait till problem or illness does not go away
 - Shame and Stigma
 - Circular communication versus direct communication
 - Extended family involvement in decision making

Barriers cont...

- ▶ Naming the illness
 - Symptoms versus name of the illness
- ▶ Defining the illness
 - Pain is culturally defined (verbal expression expressed or subdued)
 - Minimizing risk and danger to self (SA men often drive to hospital with chest pains)
 - The person could be sick because of his/her past karma
 - The person could be sick because “some one did something to him/her”
 - The person could be sick because “he/she had it coming from God”
- ▶ Treating the illness
 - Western medicine or holistic approach
 - Cultural behaviour versus “enabling behaviour”
- ▶ Recovery from illness
 - Rehab versus taking care of the family

Obstacles to Engagement

- ▶ Socially constructed power imbalances within a therapy relationship stand as a major obstacle in providing culturally responsive services to the South Asian community.
- ▶ Some services or service environments reinforce unequal power. (Reception area, where the office is located).
- ▶ Mental health professionals, who are predominantly representing mainstream values, often misinterpret the behaviour of south Asians.
- ▶ Professionals “perceived as being fearful”.
- ▶ Time limited engagement – agency decides not the client
- ▶ How is trust built – providing tea or coffee and informal discussion
- ▶ How much self-disclosure – if we want the client to open up then let’s set an example by opening up
- ▶ Confidentiality – is it a North American phenomenon. Not all cultures are individualistic based
- ▶ Often, the client needs to call for admittance (de-tox and women’s shelters)

Eastern & Western Treatment Philosophies

- ▶ Acceptance
 - ▶ Harmony
 - ▶ Understanding by Awareness
 - ▶ Contemplation
 - ▶ Body–mind–spirit unity
- ▶ Control
 - ▶ Personal Autonomy
 - ▶ Understanding by Analysis
 - ▶ Problem Solving
 - ▶ Body–mind separation

EASTERN

WESTERN

Journey Towards Organizational Change

- ▶ We would like to see:
 - That organizations start on a journey to become culturally competent and move beyond translating materials
 - That organizations move beyond recruiting “token” board members and an “ethnic” secretary or front line staff
 - That organizations look at providing services where clients congregate
 - That organizations understand the difference between client centred and agency centred services
 - That organizations understand that within culturally appropriate work, clients have a world view and professionals need to adjust their philosophy, way of work and service delivery to suit their clients’ needs

Thank You!!!

