Working with Australian Indigenous People: Cultural sensitivity and competency in mental health nursing

National Health Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Capacity Building Grant:
Mental Wealth: Improving Mental Health for Better Health Outcomes Among Indigenous Australians

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About the researcher

Professionally
- Doing PhD
- Masters. RN., RMHN
- Clinically – acute psychiatry both public and private
- Lecturer/Associate Director of Undergraduate Studies

Personally
- Celtic stock
- Arrived 1970 (by plane)
- Citizenship in 1982
- Married to first generation Australian – of Ukrainian & Russian parents
- 3 beautiful first generation Australian children
- Now doing research in the area of indigenous mental health!
Background

- Culture affects how people experience mental illness & how they interpret signs and symptoms.

- Large discrepancies in the mental health and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous Australians compared with non-Indigenous peoples, (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare)

- Mainstream mental health services tend to be ethnocentric & therefore tend not to be accessed by indigenous people.

- Culturally inappropriate mental health care further marginalises indigenous people and places them at higher risk of associated health problems and complications.

- There is little research evident in Australia surrounding the scope of culturally appropriate mental health nursing care.

- Culturally relevant nursing care by mental health nurses is significant in terms of competency, duty of care and individualised and client focused care.

- Nurses are placed in an ideal position to consider the cultural appropriateness of mental health care.
Objectives

Objectives of the study

- Explore and describe mental health nurses’ perception of indigenous conceptualisation of mental illness and wellbeing; the competency to deliver culturally appropriate health care; and the barriers and facilitators to providing appropriate mental health care for indigenous groups.

- Explore and describe the concept of culturally sensitivity and appropriate mental health care from an indigenous perspective and the barriers and facilitating factors for indigenous people in accessing mental health services.

- Contextualise the experience of culturally appropriate mental health care
Significance

- Valuable information regarding mental health nurses’ level of competency to provide culturally appropriate and competent care
- Education & training
- Needs of indigenous people & therapeutic alliances
- Design and development of culturally appropriate services
- Reconciliation and bridging the gap between the health of indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.
- Best practice guidelines in culturally appropriate mental health care
Methodology

- Grounded theory framework
- Participants/Sample
- Data Collection
- Data Analysis
- Advice to be sought from indigenous reference group regarding culturally appropriate methods of collecting data
Ethical Issues

- Ethical approval re use of mental health nurses
- Further ethical approval to include indigenous people
- Advice to be sought from indigenous reference group regarding culturally appropriateness
Comments?