‘The starting point might be to recognise that the problem starts with us non-Aboriginal Australians. It begins, I think, with the act of recognition’

Paul Keating, Prime Minister of Australia 1992
Redfern Park, Sydney
Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander care in mainstream health services

Are we asking the right questions?

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Plan

• Health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
• Slow progress improving Indigenous health
• How can policies and practices in health care do more to improve Indigenous health and wellbeing?
Background

• Health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
• Health service delivery to Indigenous Australians
• Critical reflection
• Concept of race privilege
• Race as structuring principle (Singleton & Linton 2006)
Conversations about race

- Whiteness and Aboriginality in Australia
- Invisibility of whiteness (Moreton-Robinson 2009; Pease 2010)
- Racialised social structure (Kowal 2008)
- Mainstream model of health care
- Racism
Racism: prejudice + power

- Experiences of racism
  - Interpersonal
  - Institutional
  - Internalised (Paradies 2005)

- Racism damages health (Larson et al 2007)

- Privilege – ‘uneearned power’ (McIntosh 1992)

- Invisibility of privilege (Pease 2010)
Qualitative methods

• Interviews, discussions, reflections
• Perceptions and experiences of mainstream health care for Indigenous patients
• Thematic analysis of interview transcriptions
Findings

• Institutional racism
  – ‘One size fits all’
• Structure constraining agency (Ziersch 2011)
• Externalising the problem
• Accountability?
Ways forward

• Policy initiatives – do they link to practice and are they evaluated for their effectiveness?
• Interrogating whiteness
• ‘I treat everyone the same’?
• Resistance
Ways forward

• Cultural education and training
• Evaluation
• Avoid tokenism
• Indigenous / non-Indigenous collaboration
• Structural engagement
• Ethical practice
References

• McIntosh P. White privilege: unpacking the invisible knapsack Independent School. 1990;Winter(31-36)
• Moreton Robinson A. Talkin’ up to the white woman. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press; 2009
The story of our logo: The logo uses the central symbol of a head to represent the field of mental health. It is surrounded by large circles which symbolize the organisations and community groups which contribute to a combined effort to improve mental health in Australia. The smaller circles in between the larger circles represent the individuals affected by mental ill-health and their families. The roads in the outer section of the logo symbolize the many pathways that lead to mental ill-health and back to restored mental health. The logo was designed by Allison Bellottie, an Aboriginal artist belonging to the Malgana and Nanda tribal groups from the Shark Bay area of Western Australia.