Culture: Safety and the Mental Health Facility

camh Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Rani Srivastava RN, PhD
Shawn Lucas BA, M.Div.
Canada's Virtual Forum on Patient Safety
October 2012

Presentation Overview

- Safety in Mental Health
- Culture of Mental Health
- Adding the lens of "cultural diversity"

camh

Safety in Mental Health

- Physical Safety

- Emotional / Psychological Safety

- Cultural Safety

camh

Safety in Mental Health

- Absence of Harm
  - Fear
    - Violence & Aggression
    - Imposition,
    - Loss of Freedom
- Access
  - Stigma
- Engagement

camh

Understanding the Mental Health Context

More than any other aspect of health, mental health is shaped by the pervasive influence of culture….Mental health assessment depends on observation and assessment techniques which are the subjective experience of the assessor, with few objective tools such as radiographs or blood work

Lo & Pottinger,2007

camh

Understanding the Mental Health Context

- **Illness / wellness sometimes hard to distinguish**
- **Clinician interpretation of behavior and judgment are critical to assessment & intervention**
- **Client autonomy, credibility often compromised**
  - **historical legacy of confinement and perhaps punitive approach**
- **Client strengths harder to identify and draw on**

camh

Patient Safety & Mental Health

Patient Safety literature is limited in the area of mental health

For persons receiving care in medical settings, particular vulnerabilities exist with respect to:

- Self Harm
- Violence & Aggression
- Restraint Use
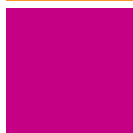- Absconding & elopement
- Medications

How is Patient Safety impacted by …

- Stigma
- Fear of Harm
- Limited ability to access own strengths/resources
- Other attributes of mental health culture…

camh

In Health Care and Patient Safety

- Culture Matters

- Culture of the health care provider(s) and system matters as much as the culture of the individual client
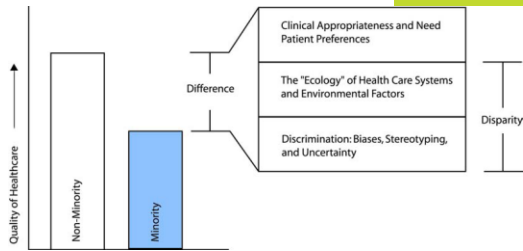
camh

Culture and patient safety

Language and culture play an important role in mental health service delivery. For example, if I go to a service provider who doesn't know my language and is not familiar with my culture, first of all I will not be able to explain my problem to him/her as I want to say it, secondly, even if he/she gets me, will still not be able to provide me with culturally appropriate treatment which is very important. – *Focus Group Participant,*

REF: Improving mental health services for immigrant, refugee, ethno-cultural and racialized groups, Mental Health Commission of Canada Diversity Task Group

camh

Culture and patient safety

Differences, Disparities, and Discrimination: Populations with Equal Access to Healthcare- IOM, 2002.

camh

Adding cultural diversity to mental health care

Challenges are more likely to arise in:

- Communication
- Relationships with care providers
- Self management – ability to navigate the system and draw on supports
- Drawing on client strengths including family, religion, values/beliefs

camh

Religion & Mental Health: Barrier or Facilitator?

- Religious involvement is generally conducive to mental health and patients often use religion to cope with their distress
- Religious preoccupation / delusions are associated with illness severity and poor outcomes
- The 'culture' of mental health professionals in the Western world may be viewed as being antagonistic towards religion
- First line of help seeking for mental health is often in the community, lay healers, and religious groups

Vignette 1

A Sikh man is brought into the emergency room wearing a turban and a 'Kirpan' with his family. His family report that his behaviour has been somewhat bizarre, but he has not been aggressive towards others or attempted to harm himself. Staff are concerned about the turban and the *Kirpan* as they are viewed as a weapon or items that could be used by the client to hurt himself or others.

Vignette 2

A forty year old client who describes himself as a devout Roman Catholic attends the hospital mass on a weekly basis. He states that attending mass is important to him as it helps him to feel connected to God. One week his privileges are taken away he's not able to attend mass. The client becomes even more agitated at this restriction.

camh

Identifying the themes …

- Beliefs – sources of strength, risk or pathology?
- Communication obstacles
  - Ability: Technical challenges (linguistic differences, disorganized thought) that make it harder to communicate
  - Credibility – discount what one is saying because …
- Fear & Self Protection leading to harm to others
- Impact of restrictions

camh

Promoting Patient Safety requires:

- Trust in the system, cultural competency of services and co-operation between service providers may decrease barriers to care
- Organizational cultural competence strategy that includes
  - Cultural Competence Education for all staff who have contact with clients (professional & non-professional)
  - Linguistic competence training

Recommendations by the MCC Diversity Task Group, 2009

Cultural Competence in Mental health to promote Safety

Understand:

- Unique cultural symptoms and interventions
- The clients usual rules of interaction
- The clients view of mental illness & treatment and its impact on the individual and family

camh

Cultural Competence in Mental health to promote Safety

Acknowledge and address:

- Challenges to establishing a therapeutic relationship
- Client – Client interactions
- Power issues inherent in the system as well as the clinician-client relationship
- Communication challenges
- Diverse perspectives within the team
- Stigma, fear, vulnerability

Cultural Competence in Mental health to promote Safety

Identify and foster:

- Cultural strengths including religion, cultural views and traditions
- Active and ongoing engagement of clients and their support systems (family, peers, community)

camh

Patient Safety in Mental Health in Diverse society means

- More than an absence of overt adverse events
- Addressing barriers to effective collaboration between clients and clinicians
- Interaction between the culture of mental health and the client's cultural views
- Acknowledging limitations in our practices

camh

Patient Safety in Mental Health in Diverse society means

- Working with clients to develop 'safety' and 'quality' plans that are meaningful to them

- Engaging family & community

- Working as a team

- Developing a culturally responsive organization and system

camh

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank You

Questions and Comments

Rani.Srivastava@camh.ca
Shawn.Lucas@camh.ca

camh

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____