Mental Health Network
Multicultural Subnetwork Steering Committee Newsletter

Cultural Lens

Multicultural Subnetwork Members' Forum

Inside this issue:

The Multicultural Subnetwork Members' Forum held on 13th May at the Mental Health Commission was the first time members reconvened since this Subnetwork's inception in 2016.

The event afforded the opportunity to map specialist services/programs that are currently and specifically funded by government to service the health and/or mental health needs of ethnoculturally and linguistically diverse (ELD)* communities or to advocate on their behalf.

The presented overview of the ELD landscape was followed by productive dialogue and critical analysis concerning the continuing gaps in services for this cohort. In harnessing the cumulative expertise from participants (including service providers, carers, consumers and policy makers), these discussions were distilled into the Steering Committee's Work Plan for consideration in moving forward. Key priorities identified for the Committee's considerations include raising awareness about:

Service gaps in addressing comorbid neurodevelopmental problems;

The challenges encountered by ELD adolescents as they transition from 'child' to 'youth' in a different culture;

The need for assessment tool adaptations to ensure validity and reliability of measures obtained;

Unanticipated changes in a person's mental health presentation during the resettlement period;

The need to build a peer-support network to facilitate early intervention amongst our target population;

'Softer' referral pathways that recognize what may otherwise be potential barriers to service access for ELD; and,

Embedded understanding of the mental health risks of ELD-LGBTIQ (see article next page).

Concurrent with raising awareness and promoting appropriate strategies, the Steering Committee will also actively work to complement the MHC's work in developing its Roadmap of Services where it pertains to mental health services for ELD.

Subnetwork Steering Committee Members 2021

Jose Ciciliamma
LGBTQI+ Advocate

Christina Foo
Snr Social Worker, CAMHS

Dr Samir Heble
Psychiatrist, Medical Co-Director
Steering Committee sponsor representative

Iren Hunyadi
Consumer Advocate

Manjit Kaur
Subnetwork Steering Committee Co-Chair
Consumer Advocate

Ruth Lopez
Snr Policy Officer, Cultural Diversity Unit, WA Health

Leanne Mirabella
Social Worker, Disability and AOD Consultant

Dr Mark Porter
MST Program Manager, Specialised CAMHS

Wendy Rose
Chief Executive Officer, Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre

Dr Bernadette Wright
Subnetwork Steering Committee Co-Chair
Clinical Psychologist, Primary Health Services

VACANT POSITIONS:
- WA Country Health Services (WACHS)
- Carer Advocate

Ex-Officios:
Rod Astbury - Mental Health Network Co-Lead
Ashleigh Owen - Mental Health Commission Liaison

* We have chosen to use the term 'ethnoculturally and linguistically diverse' (ELD) to refer to the target population for which our subnetwork has been established. We believe this term recognises that ethnicity, as much as culture, can significantly influence values and belief systems surrounding timely mental health service access, utilisation and perceived anticipated outcomes.

Living the Rainbow
Jose Ciciliamma

A key priority identified at the Subnetwork Forum is the need for service providers to embed a true understanding of the complex issues faced by people from ELD backgrounds who identify as LGBTQI+. Steering Committee member, Jose Ciciliamma, presented this topic at the Forum and writes the following based on their lived experience of being stigmatised by their own community and grossly misunderstood by service providers whom they felt was dismissive of them.

In many communities, diverting from culturally accepted sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex is a perceived threat to social order. Labelled as a 'disease' - many cultures believe it requires 'healing'. There is also a denial that same-sex attraction exists in migrant and refugee communities. All these beliefs often lead to hostility and violence against same-sex attracted and gender diverse people in ELD communities. Those who identify as LGBTQI+ face complex discrimination and social exclusion when issues of sexuality, gender identity, intersex status and ethnocultural and linguistic diversity intersect. This includes racism within LGBTQI+ communities and services, as well as homophobia, transphobia or heterosexism within their own community. Many of us from ELD backgrounds and who identify as

"There is a denial that same-sex attraction exists in migrant and refugee communities"

LGBTQI+ face the stress of managing two identities – an 'out' LGBTQI+ identity within the broader community; and the need to conform with a heterosexual identity in their cultural community circle. The real fear of losing the critical infrastructure of community and family support, if we are to disclose whom we truly are, is paralysing for many of us who are ELD-LGBTQI+.

These are important considerations for service providers who want to genuinely provide a safe place to service the needs of LGBTQI+ people from ELD backgrounds. It is also imperative that leaders and/or influencers within the LGBTQI+ *mainstream* community understand the underlying painful challenges we experience in order to be accepted for what our own respective communities perceive as 'being different'.

Framework for Multicultural Mental Health

We welcome your contribution and comments. Email us at MHNetwork@mhc.wa.gov.au with subject line: *'Cultural Lens'*

Embrace Multicultural Mental Health based in Canberra, presented at the Subnetwork Forum on the Framework for Mental Health in Multicultural Australia.

A free, online resource to facilitate engagement with ELD communities and individuals, the Framework offers tools and modules to enhance the cultural responsiveness of practitioners and organisations (public and community managed). It is mapped against national standards to help organisations meet these standards requirements and provides free access to support and resources for an effective transcultural process in servicing ELD mental health needs. It is important to note that the Framework has been developed to support core business processes, rather than as a source of additional work.

Framework users can build on their strengths and address areas for improvement in a self-paced way to inform both professional and service development. The four Framework

modules comprehensively assess individual practitioner's or organisations' cultural responsiveness in mental health service delivery. Users can choose to start with any module that addresses a current need or priority, or proceed sequentially, at their own pace. The modules comprise:

- Planning Strategically to meet Multicultural Community Needs;
- Developing Safe, Quality & Culturally Responsive Services;
- Working Together to Promote Mental Health in Multicultural Communities; and,
- Building a Culturally Responsive Mental Health Workforce.

The results obtained through undertaking each module allows for a self-evaluation that will indicate which areas should be prioritized for action to enhance cultural responsiveness.

Are you from an ELD background with a lived experience ?

Your knowledge and what you experienced as a service user of mental health services may assist others. A focus group is being convened as part of this work to learn how service users could get more involved in guiding mental health research in WA. Selected participants will be paid $35 p/h for their time. For further information please email: Co-roamers@curtin.edu.au.

Statutory Review into the Mental Health Act 2014 (the Act)

This review of the Act is to consider its operation and effectiveness. If you have had a personal experience with the Act as a person from ELD background, what do you think is missing and what would you like to see included to improve services for those from an ELD background ? Please let us know at MHNetwork@mhc.wa.gov.au with subject line: *'Cultural Lens'*.