

32

What is Multiculturalism?

Cultural diversity is an important aspect of the Australian society, as 44% of Australians were either born overseas or had at least one parent born overseas. (ABS · A Picture of the Nation · 2010.0 · 2006)

Multiculturalism and Mental Health

Mental health problems can affect people of all ages, from all cultures and social groups. Studies have highlighted that a variety of factors can act as barriers to people from diverse backgrounds accessing mental health services.

These can include stigma associated with mental illness, lack of knowledge about available services, GP referral patterns, language and cultural barriers and differences in cultural explanations and perceptions surrounding mental health.

Discrimination and cultural factors also play an important role in mental health, particularly in how mental health conditions are experienced and how they affect a help-seeking behaviour.

Culturally and Linguistically

Diverse (CALD) carers

In CALD communities caring is usually seen as just a normal part of the family and primary caregiver. Carers from CALD backgrounds have similar issues as carers from Anglo Saxon backgrounds such as the demands of caring and insufficient support services however, they also differ in some major issues, mainly lack of information in their language and a form they can understand, about the medical condition of the person they are caring for, low usage of support services, use of

traditional healers, lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity by service providers, lack of understanding about the various services and treatment options, relationship problems, role strain, stigma and shame.

Difficulties for CALD carers

Migration and adjustment to a new life style carry difficulties for everyone. Being a carer for a person with mental illness makes the experience even harder. Some of the barriers are:

Language barrier

- Prevents carers for seeking help
- It is difficult to express feelings in a different language
- Person cannot be sure that has been understood appropriately

Cultural barriers

- Different cultures do have different approach to mental illness and caring which are not necessary same in the Australian society
- It is difficult to change one's own values and beliefs in order to get support
- It takes a great courage to step out form the cultural barriers

Stigma is the biggest enemy that keeps people suffering on their own. Stigma affects all carers and consumers and CALD carers even more.

32

Service for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)

STARTTS provides culturally appropriate counselling; psychological assessments; early intervention; therapy; referrals to people from CALD backgrounds.

Phone: (02) 9794 1900

Website: www.startts.org

Services available to CALD carers

Community Relations Commission for Multicultural NSW

Ground Floor
Government Office Block
117 Bull Street
Newcastle NSW 2300

Phone: (02) 4929 4191

Northern Settlement Services

Organisation offering services including multi-lingual information and referral, casework and counselling, community, education and development.

8 Chaucer Street
Hamilton 2303
Phone: (02) 4969 3399
www.nsservices.com.au

Centrelink Multicultural Call Centre

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- Being strong means asking for help when you feel afraid for your family member
- If you struggle with the language barriers, there are bilingual mental health professionals to help you out. You just need to ask for them
- Join the support group; all carers speak the same language. You can benefit greatly by sharing your experiences
- Look after yourself, do things for yourself and never be ashamed of your life. You are the strong one.1 2

“As a CALD carer I have followed these steps above and currently I am studying social work, working and caring for my son. Before I was an anxious carer, today I have my own life too.” (From a carer’s experience)

Hunter New England Area Health

Health Care Interpreter Service
Phone: 1800 674 994

Multicultural Mental Health Liaison Officer
Phone: (02) 4016 4780

Transcultural Mental Health Centre (TMHC)

Bilingual mental health professionals, social workers, mental health nurses and psychologists provide clinical intervention.
Phone: (02) 9840 3800 or 1800 648 911

www.dhi.gov.au/tmhc