"Cultural Safety in Rural and Remote Aboriginal Aged Care"

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Abstract

Introduction

The provision of culturally safe aged care for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a suggested strategy to address barriers to accessing aged care services. In this project we worked with rural and remote Aboriginal aged care organisations in South Australia to develop, pilot and evaluate evidence-based models for culturally safe aged care, according to the expressed needs of their clients.

Methods

This participatory action research project involved three stages. In stage one, qualitative interviews were conducted with older Aboriginal people to gain an understanding of their views on culturally safe aged care. The interviews were analysed thematically, and the findings were developed into six overarching principles of cultural safety in aged care. These principles provided the foundation of a training program in stage two and an implementation pilot within six aged care sites in stage three. A developmental evaluation approach assessed outcomes at each stage. This included a pre- and post- survey that assessed individual and organisational cultural safety and in-depth interviews with aged care workers about the implementation of the principles in practice.

Results

The principles of cultural safety were: respecting Aboriginal culture; creating Aboriginal friendly spaces; providing buildings that meet community needs; employing an Aboriginal workforce; improving cultural competence and developing partnerships. Stage two results suggested organisations could work towards improving: community involvement in the design and use of facilities and ensuring the provision of information to clients in appropriate formats. Stage three results suggest the implementation of the cultural safety principles can guide organisations in the design of services that meet the cultural needs of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Conclusion

Incorporating these principles of cultural safety in aged care requires individual and organisational effort to reflect on and adapt current models of care, policies, service delivery, environments and work practice.