Safe and effective cultural mentorship in general practice

BACKGROUND:
Inequitable access to and inappropriate care are significant causes of the gap in health status between Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. Aboriginal cultural mentorship in general practice can help facilitate practices to become culturally competent and improve health outcomes for their Aboriginal patients. The “Ways of Thinking and Ways of Doing (WoTWoD)” program is a clinical re-design process which utilises cultural mentorship supported by a toolkit and a local care partnership. However, there is a paucity of literature about what constitutes effective cultural mentorship.

AIM:
To conceptualise and operationalise a model of cultural mentorship within WoTWoD to facilitate culturally and clinically appropriate care.

METHODS:
A participatory action approach was used to develop and implement a model of cultural mentorship within WoTWoD.

- Aboriginal elders and staff of PHN and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations participated in workshops, one in Sydney and one in Melbourne.
- Participants were provided with information about WoTWoD and discussed their own in-depth experiences and perceptions of cultural mentorship to achieve consensus on a useful cultural mentorship model.

Figure 1: Aboriginal Cultural Mentor Model

CONCLUSION:
For mentorship to be effective cultural mentors require:
- An understanding of the health system and services available
- Leadership and advocacy qualities
- Effective communication skills with general practice staff
- Passion and pride in their own Aboriginal identity

These 4 characteristics enable all the partners to ‘walk together’ to provide culturally and clinically appropriate care and improve health care choices for Aboriginal communities.

A cultural mentor has “an ongoing involvement with the research process and provides advise about world views and cultural values, beliefs and practices and associated protocols which need to be followed.” - James Cook University.

RESULTS:
The Aboriginal Cultural Mentorship Model (Figure 1) was developed as the framework for effective cultural mentorship. The mentor relationship with practices and PHN staff (Figure 2) is essential to enhancing equitable access to and use of safe and quality care for Aboriginal patients in general practice.

Figure 2: Aboriginal Cultural Mentorship in the practice and Local Care Partnership

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Dr Phyllis Lau
Chief Investigator & Project Coordinator (Melbourne)
T: +61 3 8344 6043
E: p.lau@unimelb.edu.au

Dr Iqbal Hasan
Project Coordinator (Sydney)
T: +61 2 8738 9330
E: i.hasan@unsw.edu.au

Prof Siaw-Teng Liaw
Principal Investigator
T: +61 2 9636 8520
E: i.hasan@unsw.edu.au