

Community Needs Driven Research Network

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Intercultural Issues

Participants identified issues related to clients' and staff's cultural backgrounds, which can impact care and team development. With an increasingly multicultural country, more continuing care (CC) clients, as well as staff, are from different backgrounds. This increases the demand for staff to have intercultural skills. One question that came from this issue is how cultural differences impact the dementia population and those with mental health issues. Care staff have to be aware of differing needs, expectations, and boundaries of clients and their families who are of different cultural backgrounds. Cultural and spiritual needs of clients are not well known and need further research and staff training.

What front-line workers said:

· “We have generational types of issues and understandings, beliefs, practices, and then we also have cultural, and how does that affect the family and the clients' perceptions of their care and happiness with their care?”



· “... is a very important area and understanding what the various backgrounds bring...Like Jewish, what's important to them. And understanding what's important with the various Islamic groups, and the Buddhists, and the Sikhs. And understanding and being able to be supportive in an appropriate way to the various cultures.”

· “We have a fair number of residents who are of a different cultural and religious background, and I think it's becoming more and more difficult to help them to meet their cultural and spiritual needs.”



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Cultural diversity also affects front-line staff:

HCAAs and non-direct care staff (e.g. dining room staff and housekeeping) are often new Canadians, and may find communicating in English a challenge. This can make learning and following directions within the CC facility difficult. In some cases, staff use their native language at work to increase efficiency and overcome communication challenges. But, this may lead to increased confusion and disorientation for clients, and possibly increase the frequency of challenging behaviours. A second challenge new Canadians with professional medical or nursing backgrounds can face is difficulty meeting the requirements to practice in Canada. Due to this, they often seek HCA positions, which can lead to frustration and cause them to look for additional responsibility beyond the HCA scope-of-practice but similar to what they had in their home country.

What front-line workers said:

- "... as a resident you can have different cultural languages being spoken... caregivers would speak in their own language and I don't know if there's actually education that it's important to speak in the language if you can, I mean they already are confused and having dementia problems and then all the people around them are speaking in another language, um, it not only isolates them, but it also confuses them."
- "I'm not sure of what education or research has been done to show the impact on the residents when staff speak other languages in front of them. Specially, for people to be able to take that information into a study it would show to them this is what happens to this particular resident when you are talking in a different language."
- "The majority of the health care aids are new Canadians, maybe more nurses, and so how do you help them deal with us? And communication, um, in cross-cultural or transcultural nursing, communication patterns."



ICCER related activities on intercultural issues:

1. A research team (University of Calgary, Bethany Care Society, and Wing Kei) has been funded to identify the cultural competency training options available to migrant workers and new Canadians who work in CC in Alberta, as well as look at the cultural awareness training needs of migrant workers and new Canadians in this sector. English language and job skills training are offered to these employees, however, cultural awareness training is often overlooked. Cultural-based training can enhance understanding and communication between staff, residents, and families, and also strengthen staff's sense of belonging in the CC sector. Results will be available September 2015.