Asian Women’s Health Symposium

Date: Friday 18 September 2009
Time: 8.30am – 4.30am
Venue: Alexander Park Function Centre
        Greenlane West, Epsom

Parallel Session 4 – Mental Health and Asian Women in New Zealand
Main Facilitator: Bevan Chuang, Settlement Support Coordinator – Auckland City,
Auckland Regional Migrant Services
**Introduction:**

The Asian population in New Zealand is very diverse. It includes New Zealand born, immigrants and refugees.

Despite the ‘Health Immigrant Effect’, mental health is one that is not screen under Immigration New Zealand’s health requirements.\(^1\)

750 refugees are accepted in New Zealand annually under the Quota Refugee Programme. They come with them trauma and fear in addition to settlement difficulties.

In general, Asian people in New Zealand are also more likely to experience lack of (or under-) employment and settlement difficulties which are associated with negative health effects, particularly in terms of mental health.\(^2\)

Primary Mental Health services are, however, significantly under-utilised by the Asian population.\(^3\) This is due to the lack of a specific focus on the mental health needs of people of Asian origin.

This session will be looking at the following:

- Awareness of the current mental health and wellbeing of Asian women in New Zealand
- Services available for Asian women and their families
- What are culturally appropriate
- Awareness of culturally appropriate services and resources available that meets the need of mental health and wellbeing for Asian women in New Zealand

**Speakers:**

Sonya Russell, Manager – Service Delivery, Affinity Services

**Accessing Mental Health services- the experience of Asian women**

There is a growing body of research literature into the issues faced by migrant populations particularly Asian migrants in New Zealand. Research by De Souza (AUT), Tse (Auckland University) Yee (Mental Health Commission) and others highlight the issues faced by Asian migrants in accessing the necessary supports and treatments provided by the mental health system of care. As New Zealand’s Asian population continues to grow, it is crucial that Asian women receive the services they need

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\(^1\) Whilst it restricts people that may create a ‘burden’ on New Zealand’s public health, mental health is not routinely screened as one that fits into this requirement. It is mainly restricted to physical disabilities. For definitions, visit [http://glossary.immigration.govt.nz/healthrequirementsresidence.htm](http://glossary.immigration.govt.nz/healthrequirementsresidence.htm) and [http://www.immigration.govt.nz/opsmanual/10009.htm](http://www.immigration.govt.nz/opsmanual/10009.htm)


within the context of their role within the family and the community.

This short presentation will outline some of the issues faced by immigrant Asian women in New Zealand and the challenges in accessing culturally appropriate support services that meet their mental health needs. Presenter will highlight a specific case and will outline some service options in Auckland NZ that have been designed specifically to address some of these issues.

**John Wong, National Manager, Asian Services, Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand**

There has been a rapid increase in Asian immigration to New Zealand. Asian ethnic groups grew the fastest, increasing from 238,176 in 2001 to reach 354,552 in 2006 (an increase of almost 50 percent). The number of people identifying with the Asian ethnic groups has doubled since 1996, when it was 173,502. It is just behind Pakeha (European) and Maori (the indigenous people in New Zealand). In 2006 the Asian population constituted 9.2% of the New Zealand population (Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

Most Asian people (70% to 80%) are born outside New Zealand. There are indications that this population has complex and multiple needs, including immigration and trauma-related stress, isolation and loneliness, boredom, language barriers, employment, housing and finance. These factors make this group particularly vulnerable to social dislocation and subsequent social problems such as gambling or domestic violence.

The number of Asian women who had experienced harm from problem gambling is increasing. Problem gambling among Asian women is seen as being a social rather than an individual problem compounded by difficulties with post-migration adjustment, which create mental health issues among Asian women. Face-to-face and telephone counselling interventions are important, however, contemporary public health perspectives are also very useful and are not limited to the biological and behavioural dimensions, but can also address access to social and healthcare services related to gambling and health.

This paper is to review the relationship between problem gambling and mental health among Asian women. There is a strong stigma among the two issues that may create barrier for Asian women to seek help and in what way that providers could provide appropriate services to meet their needs.

**Dr Arif Saeid, Community Services Manager, Refugees As Survivors**

The Auckland Regional Refugee Mobile Community Clinical Team is a new service of Refugees As Survivors NZ which was launched in November 2007. It provides quality community mental health services to diverse former refugee communities throughout the greater Auckland region. The team provides refugees with high accessibility to quality, culturally-responsive specialist mental health and support
The team comprise of psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors, nurses, social workers and six refugee community link workers representing the Afghan, Burmese, Somali, Iraqi, Ethiopian, Sudanese and Kurdish communities. The team travels into refugee communities for maximum accessibility and provides mental health services in assessment, intervention, counselling, social work, body therapies and a range of culturally responsive clinical therapies for trauma, family, and resettlement issue.

The team also consults trains and collaborates with mainstream mental health services, to assist them in working more effectively with refugees from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

**Jenny Long, Researcher, Te Pou**

In 2008 Te Pou worked with Asian communities and service providers to identify areas of research needed to improve Asian mental health. Questions were selected that could assist improvements in mental health and addiction care for Asian communities. This presentation will report the research areas identified and describe the steps involved in developing this research agenda. Key learnings that can be applied to developing an action and research agenda for Asian women’s health will also be discussed.

**Biography:**

**Facilitator:**

**Bevan Chuang, Settlement Support Coordinator – Auckland City, Auckland Regional Migrant Services**

She and her family migrated to New Zealand in 1996. She has a degree in Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Anthropology, Certificate in Health Promotion and Postgraduate Diploma in Museum Studies. Bevan is an active member of community groups and issues in Auckland. She is a member of Asia New Zealand’s Young Leaders Network and an alumnus for New Zealand Chinese Association’s Leadership and Development Conference. She is a committee member for New Zealand Asia Association and Auckland Chinese Community Centre; and actively participated in New Zealand Japan Society of Auckland. Settlement Support New Zealand is a Department of Labour initiative. There are 19 Settlement Support Coordinators in New Zealand and 5 in the Auckland Region.
Speakers

Sonya Russell, Manager – Service Delivery, Affinity Services

John Wong, National Manager, Asian Services, Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand

John Wong had a business and management background when he migrated to New Zealand in 1992. In the nineties he was awarded Bachelor of Commerce and Master of Education in Counselling (Honours) degrees by The University of Auckland. He has seventeen years of counselling and training experience and is a member of The New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC), The Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW). He is also elected as Governance Board members of ANZASW and the Health Promotion Forum. John is the Director of Asian Services at The Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand where he has extensive involvement with many different community groups. He has a strong interest in problem gambling and is committed to help new migrants in their settlement process.

Dr Arif Saeid, Community Services Manager, Refugees As Survivors

Arif served as a medical doctor in Afghanistan for Medecins Sans Frontieres and has led the Community Services Team and worked with RAS since June, 2001. He identifies health and other special needs at the grassroots level within different refugee communities and initiates response. He supports and supervises the Community Facilitators to carry out health promotion, community development, and resettlement education activities in their own communities. He identifies needs for training and capacity-building and links directly with managers and funding providers in developing new resources. He works with refugee communities in employment, health and other initiatives which improve lives and advance resettlement. Arif liaises with Governmental and NGO and community groups, participates in community development and networking.

Jenny Long, Researcher, Te Pou

Jenny Long is a researcher with Te Pou, the National Centre of Mental Health Research, Information and Workforce Development. She has a post-graduate qualification in psychology and experience working as a volunteer at youthline phone counselling service. Last year, Jenny worked with a range of community groups, service providers, researchers and policy makers from around New Zealand to develop a mental health and addiction research agenda for Asian communities. Jenny has since been involved in a number of mental health service development advisory groups, and disseminates information about new service developments and research for Asian communities to mental health service providers in New Zealand.