



healthfocus

clinical psychology services

It's Summer time!

"Summertime is always the best of what might be." -- Charles Bowden

Hello everyone,

Happy New Year!

Yong and the rest of the Healthfocus Team hope that you have had an enjoyable holiday season and are ready to leap into 2020 and another year of opportunity.

While Australian summers are known for hot days, warm nights, especially good for enjoying outdoor activities, this summer has seen news dominated by severe bushfires across the country which have affected many Australians, particularly in the Eastern states.

If you or anyone you know has been emotionally affected directly or indirectly by bushfire, Healthfocus is ready to provide psychological support. Please talk to us and your GP.

The emerging coronavirus reports will no doubt give extra worry for families returning from overseas travel and preparing for the commencement of the school term.

In this newsletter we are happy to announce that Jacinta and Jessica are joining the team.

We've also included an information piece on multicultural and racial dimensions of psychological treatment from Dr Yeow Tan who is still keeping in touch with us from overseas.

Finally, there's a summary of the way that GP Mental Health Care Plans, referrals and Medicare rebate annual caps sometimes interact.

We are looking forward to being of service in 2020.

-- Yong and the Healthfocus team

Newsletter

Summer 2020

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Multiculturalism & Race in the Therapy Room

by Dr Yeow Tan

Can cultural and racial differences affect the therapeutic process?

We live in a multiracial society within a world of cultural connectedness, particularly with the increased ease of motion and information around the world.

Based on the 2016 ABS census, at a 95.1% response rate, over 300 spoken languages were identified in Australian homes, and close to 50% of Australians are first- and second-generation Australians (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

As a result of this evolving and culturally diverse nation, inter-racial/cultural encounters in the therapy room are increasingly common.

Should I search for a therapist of similar ethnic background?

Seeking treatment and being in therapy can be difficult and daunting. It takes courage and sufficient willingness to allow oneself to be seen through the eyes of a complete stranger.

Deciding who or the type of therapist to work with is equally hard, particularly with persons who perceive themselves to be systematically marginalised. The search for a therapist of the same race and/or cultural background is unsurprisingly due to the assumption of shared understanding and attitudes, and the potential for clients to feel more comfortable expressing themselves in their native language.

While literature (on ethnic minorities) generally supports therapist-client race/culture matching in areas of service utilisation and dropout rates (Weekes, 2010), there lacks consistent, statistically significant relationship between race/culture matching and symptom improvements (Erdur, Rude, & Baron, 2003), and development of a strong therapeutic alliance (Leite & Peluso, 2018).

In summary, having similar racial/cultural background does not guarantee better treatment outcomes or a good therapist-client bond, pointing to the greater importance of multicultural competence.

What is Multicultural Competence?

Rather than being defined as a set of skills, multicultural competence is viewed as an ongoing process of gaining self-awareness

of one's personal values and biases, and their impact on the client (Adams, 2010).

Sue (1998) encourages therapists to be curious as opposed to making premature conclusions about persons from a culturally different background, and to appropriately generalise while individualising clients' experiences to minimise stereotyping.

What does this mean in the therapy room?

It is unlikely and impossible to have a full understanding of and be entirely knowledgeable about the culture of another. The importance of expanding self-awareness as a therapist and understanding one's own stereotypes and judgment is supported by a qualitative study that explored therapists' experiences of working with culturally and linguistically diverse clients in Australia (Khawaja & Lathopolous, 2014). The study also *identified the therapeutic relationship and treating clients with respect as more important than having cultural knowledge*, as such information can be gained from clients as the therapy progresses.

Attitudes regarding race held by therapists and clients, conscious and unconscious, can manifest in the therapy space and impact clinical outcomes.

According to Gaertner and Dovidio (2005), persons who consciously deny their personal prejudices yet scored highly on tests measuring implicit racist attitudes are described as aversive racists.

They investigated the efficacy of working collaboratively among mixed-race pairings and found: Blacks working with nonprejudiced Whites performed most efficiently, followed by Blacks paired up with consciously prejudiced Whites, and lastly Blacks with aversive racists.

The findings suggest a likely translation of unconscious, implicit attitudes to nonverbal behaviour which can be picked up by the prejudiced person, reducing synergistic effects in the working alliance.

It was suggested that aversive racists send mixed messages due to the additional cognitive load, negatively impacting on their performance (Gaertner & Dovidio).

This reiterates the need for therapists to understand themselves and their own personal values, biases, and background.

Additionally, it was found that directly addressing racial issues in therapy is beneficial to therapist credibility and the therapy alliance in cross-cultural counselling as it reflects therapist

sensitivity to such concerns (Zhang & Burkard, 2008).

It is important to note that the therapist's acknowledgement and discussion of racial differences were only significantly beneficial for persons of colour in multicultural counselling (Zhang & Burkard).

Conclusion

Race and culture matters in psychological counselling, in the therapy room and the therapeutic relationship. Overlooking such critical aspects can contribute to feelings of isolation and invisibility for a client, especially so for persons of colour.

For psychologists it is important to have a good grasp of one's personal values and stereotypes, because potential impact on the client cannot be emphasised enough.

As therapists, we need to practise cultural sensitivity and multicultural counselling competence. We recognise the value of incorporating issues of race and culture.

As clients or potential clients in psychological therapy, it is useful to keep in mind that the *search for a therapist does not always need to be limited by similar race and cultural backgrounds*.

In fact, it may be of greater value to be brave and have the courage to talk about such experiences in and outside of the therapy room.

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GP MENTAL HEALTH CARE PLANS,
REFERRALS & MEDICARE ANNUAL CAPS



Do I need a new plan??

Often, early in the year, we will receive enquiries from clients about if a new GP Mental Health Care Plan (GPMHCP) is required to access Medicare rebates in a new calendar year.

A doctor's referral and GPMHCP is valid for 12 months from its initial issue. This 12 months includes any reviews, for example, when more than the initial 6 sessions are required.

The GPMHCP does not need to be renewed at the beginning of a calendar year unless its number approved sessions have all already been completed.

However, completely separate from this is the eligibility for Medicare rebates on treatment sessions (capped to 10 a year), which "resets" on January 1 every year.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

See our website for a summary of information from Medicare and the Australian Psychological Society (APS) at:
www.healthfocuspsychology.com.au/gp-info/

Riverton now open Thursdays

We would like to let everyone know that Healthfocus Riverton is now open on Thursdays.

Yong, Zdenka and Monique all have appointment times on Thursdays from mid February.



Introducing Jessica

Jessica Lem will be joining the Healthfocus front of office team as a Receptionist/Administrator and will be working at both our Armadale and Riverton locations.

Jessica has years of experience in administration in the allied health industry and is a valuable addition to our team, and is bilingual in English and Chinese.

She will be getting familiar with our clients and processes in the coming weeks as she trains with our existing team members before "flying solo" from mid-February onwards. Please join us in making her welcome.



Jacinta is available for appointments at Armadale on Wednesday afternoons and evenings.

Welcome to Jacinta

Healthfocus is pleased to welcome Ms Jacinta Tan, Clinical Psychologist Registrar, to our team of clinicians.

Jacinta holds a Masters degree in Clinical Psychology. She has experience working collaboratively with children, adolescents and their families, and adults with psychological or psychiatric disorders across the community-based and public health settings.

She has worked with a diverse range of clients with presentations such as intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, and voice hearers. She is experienced in working within a multidisciplinary team with other medical and allied health professionals.

Ms Tan conducts psychological assessments for both children and adults.

Jacinta takes on a non-judgmental, empathic stance in understanding her clients presenting difficulties while providing them with a safe space to work through challenges. She adopts evidence-based modalities to address her clients' needs. These include Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Schema Therapy, and attachment approaches.

She is a keen advocate for the parent-child relationship, and is a registered Circle of Security Parenting (COS-P) facilitator with Circle of Security International.

Ms Tan works with individuals with a broad spectrum of difficulties, including mood, anxiety, adjustment, anger, stress-related, and relationships and is bilingual in English and Mandarin Chinese.

Jacinta is available for appointments at Armadale on Wednesdays from February 2020.



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