Title: An exploration into response of culturally and linguistically diverse consumers within a multicultural alcohol and other drug service setting during COVID-19: A rapid assessment of experience of consumers and providers.

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Introduction: In response to the COVID-19 pandemic starting in February-March 2020, the Drug and Alcohol Multicultural Education Centre (DAMEC) expanded its AOD services to Telehealth and introduced flexible service delivery options for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) consumers. The changes were made to tailor the service delivery method to align with NSW Health COVID-19 advice and restrictions on movement. The numbers of sessions and episodes of care and referrals have increased since this change.

Abstract body text: We are conducting research to generate evidence of underlying cultural factors that have might have influenced our clients’ repostpones to the changes in the service delivery method. A rapid action research approach has been applied to generate data involving both clients and staff. Our methods include i) Client Survey using a structured questionnaire administered with DAMEC’s clients (n=60), and ii) Semi-structured interviewees with service providers (n=8). The survey and interviews are being conducted face-to-face, telephone or online depending on the preference of the respondent. We explore demographic data, satisfaction with the telehealth and the flexible schedules, reasons for liking or disliking the telehealth model, cultural elements influencing clients experience of telehealth model, and opinions of the clients on improving the telehealth model, and experience of service providers. Participation in the research is voluntary and anonymity and confidentiality of information are maintained.

Discussions and Conclusions: This mixed-methods research will generate evidence to understand whether culture is a factor among CALD consumers in their response to the telehealth model and flexible service options. Overall, the results will inform DAMEC’s service and help inform strategic direction in best practice service delivery. The lessons can be applied to other services in the AOD sector who support CALD clients. To date we have collected about 60% of the data. All data will be available for presentation by mid-September 2022.

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