

Developing Understanding of Lateral Violence Contributes to Culturally Safe Practice in Health

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Background:

When allied health students come to the Midwest of Western Australia for field placements in regional towns, the Western Australian Centre of Rural Health (WACRH) includes training for culturally safe practices in the form of Miyarnuwimanha cultural orientation and Clinical Yarning training. Students' responses indicated a belief that feuding and conflict within Aboriginal communities was part of Aboriginal culture, and that students were unfamiliar with the concept of lateral violence. WACRH therefore developed a workshop to address student unconscious racism and develop their knowledge about lateral violence.

Objective:

To facilitate a workshop that assists students to understand how racism, oppression and relationships are constructed and embedded in history, politics, law, policies and social constructs that lead to the creation of lateral violence.

Methodology:

The workshop draws on practical and theoretical underpinnings of lateral violence and how this impacts Aboriginal society. Participants learn about local history prior to colonization, the impacts of colonization, resistance and includes a field trip on country to a site of conflict. Students examine oppression, policies, practices, autobiographical stories, evidence, struggles and success as part of a process in addressing attitudes towards lateral violence. The role of governments in creating conditions for lateral violence and contemporary acts of oppression is discussed. The workshop concludes with strength-based ways to address and heal the drivers of lateral violence.

Outcome:

This workshop offers reflective learning which enables students to think about their own attitudes and assists in developing strength-based discourses to improve their clinical practices. Students value learning about systemic oppression and its harmful outcomes. Students share that the workshop is transformative in how they view feuding, and that they integrate these insights into delivering health practice that is less judgmental.