

Cross Cultural Newsletter

9 September 2013

Dear Members

I must apologise for the delay in the drafting of this newsletter. We had an overwhelming number of members attending our last meeting on the 27th of August. More than 70 people attended.

The topic for the night was the "INTERFACE BETWEEN POLICE, MENTAL HEALTH AND CULTURE: Cultural Sensitivity in Management of Patients requiring Police Intervention". We had, for the first time, the honour of inviting the Police to participate, not only in giving talks, but for our members to familiarise with the human side of the police thus facilitating future cooperation. The speakers for the night were Senior Sergeants Raelene Larson, and Richard Corbridge. Whilst Senior Sergeant Larson addressed the issue of family violence (with special emphasis on Asians), Senior Sergeant Corbridge helped to enlighten the audience on sexual assaults.

I presented two cases demonstrating the constructive but also sensitive aspects of the interface. Raelene (if I am allowed to use this friendly address), expounded on issues of family violence by first giving an overview and statistics of family violence. She then went on to describe the pragmatics of Police intervention and lastly address the issue of cultural sensitivities that the Police are aware of, but leaving how this could be managed to Richard (again I dare to address him in his first name).

Family violence, according to Raelene comprises of physical, sexual and psychological intrusions usually happening in a relationship, and uncommonly outside with total strangers. The Police have adopted a 3-core principle to deal with this, namely Safety, Accountability and Working Collaboratively with other agencies.

Unlike popular belief, the incidence has not increased in the past few years but only 18-20% of incidences are reported. Only 6 % are Asians among these cases. Raelene then described the pragmatics of how Police handle reported cases. There are several stages (see DVD for details):- recording (entering into a National database); taking specific power possessed by the Police to investigate, assure safety under a Police Safety Order, and take preventative actions; working collaboratively (including discussions) with other agencies such as Women's Refuge, CYFS etc; and last but not least, the consideration of activating the judicial response through the court.

Lastly, Raelene shared her experience regarding the factors contributing to cultural sensitivity, especially among the Asians. These included:-religion, arranged marriages,

losing face/shame, lack of trust in the Police and not least, language problems. Raelene finally expressed the concern that by 2021, 1/3 of the population in Auckland would likely be Asians. Cultural sensitivity in Police work is therefore highly important.

Richard took over the stand addressing the issue of child abuse and sexual crimes. He first introduced the membership and roles of the Special "Squad" who are specialists in this area. Having done this, he went on to describe in more detail practical aspects of how Police deal with reported cases; and finally again addressing cultural sensitivity.

There exists a special team dealing with abuse: the Child Protection team working with CYFS and other health agencies. Membership comprises of a Detective Senior Sergeant, Detective Sergeant, 4 Detectives, 2 Detective Constables and 2 assistants (for victim interviews). The roles include focused victim investigations; investigation and resolution of complaints; collecting forensic evidence and interview of suspects. To reduce the impact of investigations on traumatised victims, police follow strict procedures including soliciting assistance from HELP; validating disclosure with victims, addressing care and protection issues; arranging for medical examinations; identifying offenders and examining "crime" scene and witnesses. Richard described in detail the 7 basic steps in their investigation viz initial contact, forensic medical exam, forensic interview, scene examination, submission of forensic material and initiating interview and prosecution of offenders. (For further details, please refer to DVD).

Richard then elaborated on components of the medical exam including collection of evidence and more importantly initiating intervention (STDs, pregnancy, mental health issues and WINZ). To further reduce the impact of police investigations on victims, all officers are trained in interviewing techniques such as not interrogating (or interrupting) victims recount; using open ended questions (including TEDS: Tell me, Explain to me, Describe and Show) and recording on DVD to ensure accuracy. Lastly, Richard addressed the issue of cultural sensitivity and what the police do to reduce such.

Richard suggested that the following factors contribute to the sensitivity and reluctance to report: language barrier; reluctance to show emotions in court settings, shame, lack of trust in the police; violence within the family threatening and inducing guilt in divulging; fear of deportation and being victims of long term abuse (passivity, over-compliance and helplessness). More importantly, Richard reported on the following police actions to reduce the sensitivity and increase cooperation

: increasing police awareness of sensitivities, using cultural advisors within the Force; recruitment of Asian staff; using Ministry of Justice culture relevant victim advisors; utilize expert witness in court to explain cultural sensitivity and reluctance of victims to testify in public; making use of Asian media, and educating new migrants to New Zealand about need to be vigilant about safety. Last but not least, police will respect dignity and privacy, assure client that they will receive the care required and that they, not the police, are in control of the process of reporting.

The presentations did not finish until 8 o'clock. Such are the many questions raised that we had to end the session (prematurely) but to promise to arrange for another panel discussion in the near future. In all, what we have gained from this evening's session is not only about knowledge about how police work but such that we could enlighten and prepare our clients for this.

This evening, we also witnessed the police in person, flesh and blood and being one of us. They are humane and, more importantly, possess a sense of humour. Significantly, we now know that if we are uncertain about formal police involvement, we could always explore informally and discuss with the police without having to breach the privacy of our clients.

Many who register for our sessions have forgotten to include their professions. Please remember to do so in the future.

DVD orders that have been received should be posted out by next week – please send a \$2 stamp to help cover costs. (Contact Diane Ext 26514 or email dianee@adhb.govt.nz)

Thank you again for your continued interest and support.

I look forward to seeing you all at our next meeting.

S Wong

On behalf of the Cross Cultural Group

Preview of next session

**Next Meeting
Tuesday 24th September, 2013**

"Promoting the Mental Health of Senior Asian Immigrants Through Occupation"

**Please RSVP now
(if you haven't already done so)**