

Introduction to Module 5:

Cross-cultural risk assessment and development of a cultural formulation.

A training module presented by the Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry Unit

The module entitled *Cross-cultural risk assessment and development of a cultural formulation* is the fifth module to be presented to Victorian mental health clinicians as part of the Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry Unit's 2009 Pilot Training Course: *Culturally competent mental health service provision for a multicultural society*.

The module explores how cultural differences have an impact on suicidal risk and protective factors that can impact on the clinical risk assessment process.

The purpose of the module is to:

- Raise self-awareness of attitudes that may influence clinicians responses to consumers suicidal ideation and behaviours as these are linked with cultural values and beliefs around suicide;
- Improve knowledge of cultural issues influencing the manifestations of psychopathology including suicide risk factors; and,
- Provide mental health clinicians' with a framework to conduct a culturally sensitive psychiatric risk assessment, including the Cultural Formulation .

The module is important and relevant to clinical practice, because clinicians are working with a culturally diverse client group and it is important that they are:

- Knowledgeable and aware of the type of cultural mental health presentations that consumers and carers from migrant and refugee backgrounds may experience due to differences in certain cultural characteristics and behaviours in relation to suicidal risk factors; and,
- Able to consider differences in cultural values, expression of emotions , idioms of distress and explanatory models of illness when working with consumers and their families when planning and implementing culturally appropriate assessments and treatment interventions including managing cross-cultural risk factors.

This is likely to be of particular importance when working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) consumers and carers in mental health settings, as clinicians typically work within a Western medical perspective of mental health, which may not be shared by CALD clients. An outline of Module 5 is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Module outline: *Cross-cultural risk assessment and development of a cultural formulation*.

Outline **Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry Unit**

- ☞ The impact of culture on one's own attitudes towards suicide
 - Awareness of our own values
- ☞ Research findings of suicide across cultures:
 - Cross cultural risk & protective factors
 - Gender differences
 - religion and spirituality
- ☞ Cultural value dimensions, impact of the family and implications for suicidality across cultures
- ☞ Outline for a Cultural Formulation



The purpose of this training module is to provide mental health clinicians with a framework for understanding the impact of cultural values and the sense of self in mental health practice and to present a culturally informed framework for understanding risk across cultures.

Specifically, Module 5 incorporates the following topics:

- *The impact of culture on one's own attitudes towards suicide as these is linked to cultural values and beliefs that can impact the clinical encounter in mental health settings.* This topic includes discussion of clinicians own values and attitudes toward suicide as per group activity linked to Opinions Regarding Suicide Questionnaire.
- *Australian case presentation: Review of a standard risk assessment.* This topic assists participants review standard risk assessment from within own cultural group to provide context for across-culture risk assessment.
- *Research findings of suicide across cultures are presented to highlight variations found in the literature with a focus on risk and protective factors.* This topic explores the complexities of understanding and assessing suicidal behaviour across cultures, when the clinician and consumer/carer may be from differing cultural backgrounds as different cultures have different suicidal risk and protective factors. This will include impact of migration, the role of the family, gender differences and religion and spirituality as protective factors.
- *African risk assessment case presentation.* This topic provides clinicians with a demonstration around how to conduct a cultural sensitive risk assessment, including what risk and protective factors to guidance the assessment process.
- *The DSM-IV Outline for a Cultural Formulation.* This topic provides clinicians with a framework for considering cultural risk assessment issues when assessing level of risk when working with CALD clients.

Participants will be able to explore the issues relating to cultural differences to risk assessment processes via a range of interactive and reflective mediums, including group discussions, case studies, and discussion of relevant research in the field.

The emphasis of Module 5 is on providing a framework for culturally informed risk assessments when working with CALD clients. As such, the focus of this module will be to empower clinicians with the skills required to explore their clients' culture, whilst being aware of the impact of their own cultural values within the clinical relationship in relation to risk issues. These skills will assist clinicians in facilitating a more effective therapeutic relationship with CALD consumers and carers, even during difficult times such as in crisis circumstances that may arise during mental states fluctuations which hare evident in psychiatric populations.