

Introduction to Module 4:

Understanding cultural beliefs and explanatory models of illness


A training module presented by the Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry Unit

The module entitled *Understanding cultural beliefs and explanatory models of illness* is the fourth module to be presented to Victorian mental health service staff 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 builds on Modules 1, 2, and 3 and aims to further enhance workers' skills in culturally appropriate engagement of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) consumers and carers. An outline of Module 4 is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: *Module 4 outline: Understanding cultural beliefs and explanatory models of illness.*

Aims Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry Unit

- ☞ To introduce
 - The explanatory models of illness framework
 - Examples of cross-cultural beliefs
 - Negotiation of explanatory models
- ☞ To illustrate clinical application of concepts

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The purpose of the module is to:

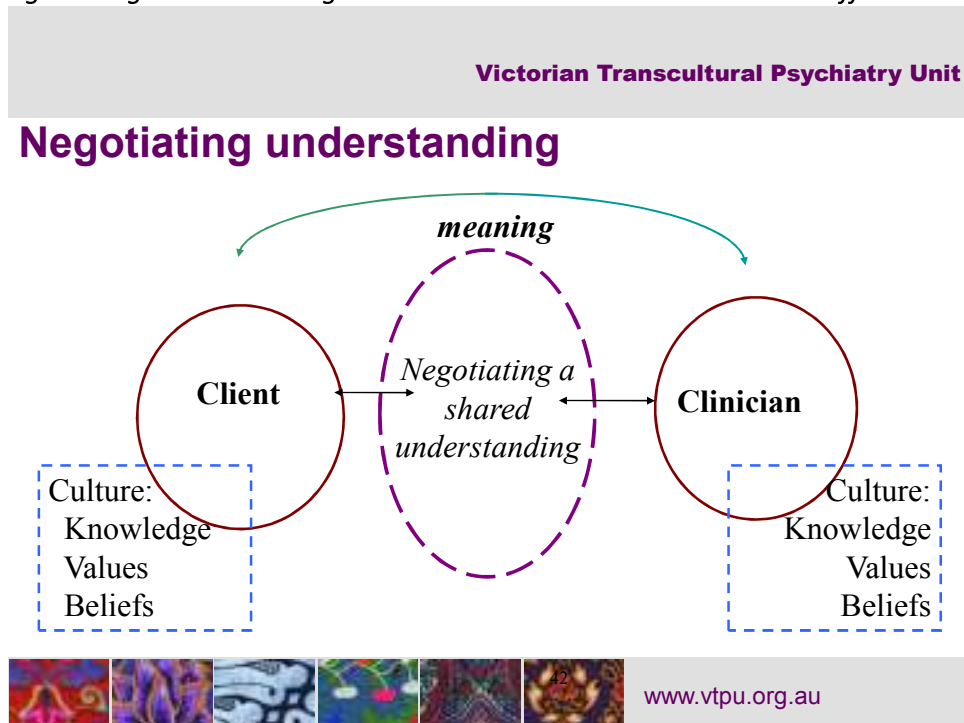
- Improve knowledge of cultural issues influencing the manifestations of psychopathology;
- Enhance understanding of factors contributing to CALD communities' low access rates to mental health services, attitudes to mental illness and responsiveness to treatment;
- Promote active skills in engaging effectively with CALD clients and families; and differentiating beliefs from psychopathology.

Specifically, Module 4 incorporates the following topics:

- *The explanatory models of illness framework.* This topic provides clinicians with an approach to understand the beliefs and explanatory models (EMs) of people from CALD backgrounds in Victoria. Kleinman's explanatory models framework is introduced, and Murdock's cultural theories of illness causation are explored, including Western and Non-Western theories of natural causation, and supernatural theories of illness causation.
- *Examples of cross-cultural beliefs.* This topic explores specific examples of a range of cross-cultural beliefs, including the evil eye, spirit possession, Islamic beliefs, and Asian worldviews. Traditional remedies are also discussed.
- *Differentiating beliefs from psychopathology.* Through a clinical case discussion, this topic introduces a framework to assist clinicians to differentiate between psychopathology and culturally normative conditions in their CALD clients. The issue of psychopathology with a cultural overlay is also explored.

- *Negotiation of explanatory models.* This topic introduces a process for clinicians to be able to effectively negotiate treatment interventions with their CALD clients. This process is depicted in Figure 2. Integration of concepts into clinical practice is encouraged via observation of a filmed clinical assessment, and subsequent role play of the skills involved in negotiating explanatory models with CALD clients.

Figure 2: *Negotiating understanding between clients and mental health staff*



Participants will be able to explore the issues relating to explanatory models and beliefs across cultures via a range of interactive and reflective mediums, including group discussions, case studies, DVD recordings and role plays.

Following on from the previous modules in the VTPU curriculum, the emphasis of this module is to provide a framework for culturally sensitive practice and engagement of CALD clients.