Cultural Safety Factsheet

This Cultural Safety Factsheet outlines some practical and achievable actions that can be implemented to strengthen cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This Factsheet complements the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) *Cultural Safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Doctors, Medical Students and Patients* position paper available at http://www.aida.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Cultural_Safety.pdf. This paper provides guidance and outlines the parameters for AIDA in our work to advocate for a health system that is culturally safe, high quality, reflective of needs and respects and incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural values.

What is Cultural Safety?

Cultural safety refers to the accumulation and application of knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values, principles and norms.[1] It is about overcoming the cultural power imbalances of places, people and policies to contribute to improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and increasing numbers within, and support for, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical workforce.[1] As outlined in our *Cultural Safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Doctors, Medical Students and Patients* position paper,[1] AIDA views cultural safety on a continuum of care with cultural awareness being the first step in the learning process and cultural safety being the final outcome. This is a dynamic and multi-dimensional process where an individual's place in the continuum of care can change depending on the setting. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health services, hospitals or communities.[1]

Why is Cultural Safety important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience a disproportionate burden of illness and social disadvantage when compared with non-Indigenous Australians. Additionally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience much higher levels of racism and discrimination. AIDA recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture as a source of strength, resilience, happiness, identity and confidence, which has a positive impact on the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. To improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, health service provision needs to be responsive to cultural differences and the impacts of conscious and unconscious racism. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to access and will experience better outcomes from services that are respectful and culturally safe places. Likewise, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students and doctors are more likely to stay and thrive in learning and working environments that consistently demonstrate cultural safety.[1]

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[1] Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association, 2013, *Position Paper Cultural Safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Doctors, Medical Students and Patients*, AIDA, Canberra.

How can Cultural Safety be strengthened?

Some practical and achievable measures can be implemented to strengthen cultural safety. This includes but is not limited to:

- prominent displays of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artwork;
- prominent displays of posters specifically aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including promotion of health messages;
- asking patients if they identify as being an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person in a respectful manner;
- providing an explanation to patients about why the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status of patients is being collected and how this information will inform better health care;
- collecting data on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status of new and existing patients (with the permission of patients);
- organising and participating in events that celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, such as NAIDOC and Reconciliation Australia events;
- practising Welcome to Country for official events;
- practising Acknowledgement of Country;
- displaying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in prominent positions;
- using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in the naming of health services, buildings and programs;
- developing partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, communities and organisations;
- becoming a member of relevant peak Indigenous organisations;
- having appropriate support structures in place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on governance bodies;
- providing cultural safety training for all staff;
- developing and implementing a Reconciliation Action Plan;
- developing and implementing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy to promote an increase in the number of Indigenous employees; and championing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

How does AIDA contribute to strengthening Cultural Safety?

Cultural safety is an overarching theme of AIDA's Values and Code of Conduct and is a key principle in all of AIDA's Collaboration Agreements. The aim is to contribute to improved health and life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people through growing the Indigenous medical workforce. Much of our work is aimed at promoting culturally safe learning environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, doctors and service delivery to patients. Examples of our work in this area includes:

- development and implementation of the AIDA Cultural Safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Doctors, Medical Students and Patients position paper;[1]
- participation in the development and implementation of a culturally inclusive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health curriculum, known as the Committee of Deans of Australian Medical Schools Indigenous Health Curriculum Framework, available at http://www.limenetwork.net.au/files/lime/cdamsframeworkreport.pdf;

- endorsement of the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine's cultural competency e-learning module;

- facilitating cultural safety workshops for members at key AIDA events including our annual conference;

- investing in mentoring programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students and doctors, such as the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners-AIDA Mentoring Program which focuses on supporting Indigenous general practice trainees to become fellows; and

- participating in fora to strengthen cultural safety in medical education and training such as the co-facilitation of a Cultural Safety in Health Services Workshop with the Health and Education Training Institute and presenting on supporting the delivery of culturally safe health services at the National Rural Health Association's annual conference.

Where can I learn more about Cultural Safety?

AIDA has developed a *Cultural Safety Toolkit* which provides a list of online resources aimed at strengthening cultural safety. The *Cultural Safety Toolkit* can be found on the AIDA website at www.aida.org.au.