

Providing an effective mental health interpreting service: Are the respective role expectations of mental health professionals and the interpreter realistic and congruent?

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Given the increasingly multicultural population in which we live, the ability to effectively work transculturally is an imperative. Within the mental health sector, transcultural mental health service delivery is commonly characterised by the frequent use of interpreter or language services. Mental health practitioners have assumptions about the role of interpreters and associated with these assumptions are expectations about what the interpreter can bring to the clinical context. Conversely, the interpreter will also have role expectations of the practitioner.

This presentation will seek to stimulate for discussion among participants the perceptions that mental health practitioners may have about interpreting for clients or patients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and how misperceptions or misassumptions may be inadvertently perpetuated by both interpreter and practitioner. The findings of a study will be presented to indicate that interpreters' self-perceptions may also be founded upon personal goals to which interpreters aspire and in doing so can impact on their own mental health.



Dr Bernadette WRIGHT is a specialist clinical psychologist who has worked in WA's transcultural mental health sector for over 13 years. She has developed numerous training seminars and specialized workshops for clinicians and other service providers aimed at enhancing cultural competency in clinical practice including training on how to work effectively with interpreters in the mental health context. For the past decade she has worked with Central TAFE in developing and delivering a training program for mental health interpreting for interpreters in the field. Winner of the Clinician's category of WA's Mental Health Good Outcomes Awards in 2007, Dr Wright's clinical cases typically comprise migrants and recently-arrived refugees presenting with complex issues and interwoven with cultural elements that may impede treatment efficacy. Her clinical practice typically necessitates the services of an interpreter. Dr Wright currently holds adjunct appointments at Curtin University, Murdoch University and Edith Cowan University.