

Thursday 17 March 2022

## OPEN LETTER

# Are you aware of your leadership responsibilities in ensuring a culturally safe workplace?

**How do you, as a leader, ensure that your workplace is a culturally safe environment for those who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, and for those of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds?**

Under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the indigenous people of Australia 'have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.'<sup>1</sup> However, bias, discrimination and racism threaten the psychological and cultural safety of staff and can diminish their feelings of acceptance and respect at work.'<sup>2</sup>

Being free from racism at work is protected by the Fair Work Act. As a manager it is important that you have the skills to identify and act on incidences of racism in the workplace, while possessing an understanding of the effects of structural racism on workplace dynamics.

This understanding is crucial not only to fostering a workplace that is free from racism for your staff, but ensuring your staff have access to training and education in relation to their own cultural capacity in order to meet the *National Competency Standards Framework for Pharmacists of Australia* (2016), while improving their communication and connection with the Aboriginal community.

For pharmacists working in patient-facing roles, this aspect of the annual Continuing Professional Development (CPD) plan is likely met by undertaking cultural responsiveness training, and focusing on delivering care to patients that is culturally safe. Undergraduate pharmacy programs and intern training programs are including these elements within their educational content, so our newly registered pharmacists are arguably the most culturally responsive we've ever had. But what of their leaders?

Successful leaders can often point to mentors who've guided elements of their career; in the Competency Standards, mentors are defined as those who share their knowledge, expertise and experience on career, technical, professional *and* cultural issues with another individual. Amongst those you consider your mentors, is there someone from whom you've gained knowledge and understanding of cultural issues that affect your patients, your team members or your workplace?

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<sup>1</sup>United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' (Article 24.2), United Nations, 2008.

[http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>Addressing burnout: Bringing data-driven solutions, care and hope to the health workforce', Beamtree©, 2021.

<https://beamtree.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Inaugural-White-Paper-Addressing-Burnout.-Bringing-data-driven-solutions-care-and-hope-to-the-health-workforce.pdf>



Whether you're newer to this conversation or continuing your journey, consider making these action items part of this year's CPD plan:

1. Ask your team members what they need from you, in order for them to continue to develop their cultural responsiveness, and to deliver high quality healthcare to each of their patients in a culturally safe manner;
2. Join the SHPA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Interest Group;
3. Get to know your organisation's or region's Aboriginal Liaison and/or Multicultural Officers;
4. Strengthen engagement with your local Aboriginal Health Service and key Aboriginal organisations in your area;
5. Find out about the Reconciliation Action Plan process, where your organisation is up to with this and how you and the pharmacy team can contribute;
6. Find out how your organisation engages with high school work experience students, cadets, gap year students and undergraduate students from culturally diverse backgrounds, and encourage culturally diverse students to pursue a career in pharmacy;
7. Arrange cultural responsiveness workshops for your team such as those delivered by Indigenous Allied Health Australia (more information available at Indigenous Allied Health Australia's [Cultural Responsiveness Training](#));
8. Develop a pictorial summary celebrating the cultural backgrounds of pharmacy team members;
9. Socialise a calendar of events for significant Aboriginal and Multi-cultural events for your local area (e.g. Closing the Gap Day, Harmony Day, NAIDOC week).

National Closing the Gap Day on 17 March 2022 is a national day of action to pledge support for achieving Indigenous health equality by 2030. Why not mark this day with your team, this year and every year? Attend or host an event, pledge to close the health and life expectancy gap experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, and find out more at <https://antar.org.au/close-gap>.

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