

Bias in Health Care Indigenous Peoples



Context

Every day, Indigenous peoples in Canada frequently encounter systemic racism when seeking healthcare services (Stevenson & Tobias, 2023). The bias that Indigenous peoples experience in healthcare then refers to the prejudice that healthcare providers or the organization may actively display, or the differences in the way they receive care as a passive bias.

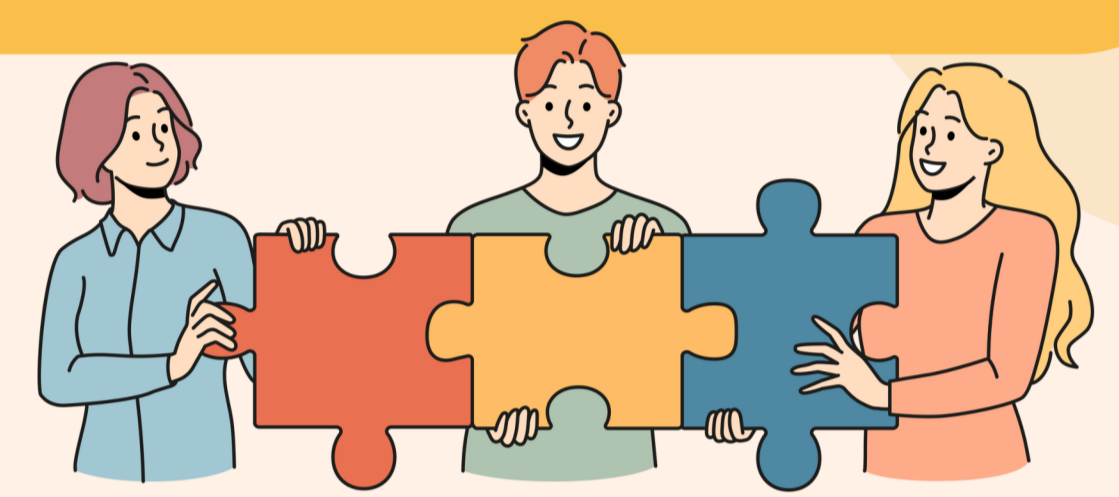
"Non-compliant"
That's what they're like -
they won't change"
"Difficult"
"Waste of time"
"Bad parent"
"Frequent flyer"

In the case of Jane Doe

An Indigenous woman in her 60s on a medical unit had attempted suicide by shooting herself under her chin with a shotgun. The patient had incurred brain damage, had a good portion of her lower jaw and upper palate removed, was receiving nutrition via a nasogastric feeding tube, and had severe nerve pain. Moreover, as the patient had been regularly maxing out her pain medication dosing, the nurses have been unable to give her more. The patient had requested the use of her herbal analgesia but has been denied as it is not approved by the hospital, and believes the staff are denying her pain medications.



IPB Analysis



Inter-relationships

- Inter-relationships are the patterns of interactions between individuals, organizations, and policies over time. Inter-relationships do not only occur between individuals face to face, but the actions of a person or organization can impact interrelationships years down the line.
 - Patient-System: The healthcare system has a history of showing bias towards Indigenous individuals and situations like the one Jane experienced, being denied pain medications only perpetuates the negative interrelationships that Indigenous People experience in the system.
 - Patient-Nursing Staff: Jane has an established relationship with the nursing staff who are responsible for her care. Trust, communication, and empathy are essential in this relationship. The patient then reported that the staff denied her pain control indicating a breakdown in communication and/or a perceived violation of trust.
 - Patient-Doctor: Need for clear communication with the doctor, so that they are aware of pain levels and can change pain control medications if current ones are not effective.

Perspectives

- Turpel and White-hill (2020) found that one-half of all non-Indigenous healthcare providers recognize the existence of interpersonal racism or discrimination within the organization.
 - From the perspective of the healthcare provider, this could potentially normalize this biased way of thinking and further perpetuate it.
- "Many indigenous people said... They 'never' feel safe, and many sharing that they 'always' have negative experiences." (Turpel & White-Hill, 2020, p. 34)
 - The bias and discrimination indigenous people face can make them feel less than, ashamed and deter them from seeking healthcare when needed.
- In the case of Jane and her unmanaged pain, it is possible that the healthcare team neglected to manage her pain properly because they felt she was "drug seeking" or being a difficult patient, specifically in relation to his perceived race.
 - From John's perspective, this neglect from his care team likely made him feel helpless and could deter him from seeking care in the future.

Boundaries



- Boundaries are a natural way we choose what is important, and what is not. To truly provide 'holistic care', is to acknowledge all the various barriers that may affect our care with marginalized people. These may impact how healthcare providers provide care, regardless of their ethical views.
 - For instance, the healthcare setting is dominated by Eurocentric views that oppose various Indigenous medicinal practices, and colonialism has greatly impacted how healthcare culture has suppressed the cultural opinions of the Indigenous peoples. In the case study, the nurse may want to allow the use of traditional medicine, but eurocentrism forces staff to conform to the hospital's 'white' policies.

Summary of Connections

- The high prevalence of discrimination against Indigenous people in the healthcare system, can in a way, normalize this behavior for individuals further perpetuating the issue.
- Indigenous people utilizing the healthcare system who are experiencing bias and discrimination often are left feeling helpless, ashamed, frustrated, and neglected.

