



I am thrilled to announce IPS Membership, an idea which started around seven years ago and which has finally come to fruition. The concept of the membership is to meet a gap in the Aboriginal mental health space which historically has had limited intellectual, personal and professional commentary.

Part of the membership includes an e-magazine titled Jilya (which means “my child” in my Njamal language). The concept of a focused response to finding solutions to the most complex of mental health issues via the merging of clinical and cultural best practice is something that I have always felt so passionate about – hence this is like “my child”.

This focus has been borne out of the divide I have witnessed between the obvious passion that exists from those who work in this field and the reality that our people remain severely over represented in health, mental health, and justice, welfare and suicide statistics. In addition to this, are the absence of evidenced based programs which have demonstrated their efficacy with Aboriginal people, have measurable outcomes and have been replicated across different Aboriginal groups. It is clear that there are many programs that are making a difference every day. Our goal is to bring this information to our membership and apply scientific rigour to an area that has been bereft of this as well as also celebrating those who have taken up the challenge of working to the benefit of our people and who offer us insights into these journeys. We believe that this is an essential starting point in challenging the concept that

Managing Directors Report

October 2016

successful treatments cannot occur with Aboriginal people across the spectrum of mental health needs from early intervention, prevention, postvention and particularly in evidenced based therapies. The only method of challenging mainstream is to provide evidence of effectiveness that is impossible to refute!

This leads me into the first two themes of the Jilya magazines, that being attachment and trauma. We will highlight the conceptual challenges and limitations of these two constructs in the evident failure to explore a cultural view of trauma and how this impacts upon assessment and treatment. More specifically the concept of racism as a factor in the development and maintenance of trauma is an area which is as important as it is unfortunately neglected. The failure to operationalise racism as a construct is something that has been of interest to me for some time as it is clear that this provides us with the best opportunity to halt the transmission of intergenerational trauma. It is also clear that it greatly assists in the development of programs which are capable of identifying and addressing such transmission. We see for example that the generation who were not directly removed experience more of the negative health and mental health related impacts that the previous generation. The most sobering depiction

of the ongoing impacts of inter-generational trauma for me is the diagram which shows the life expectancy of Aboriginal Australians compared to those in third world countries

“You have a better chance of surviving as a child born in a third world country than being born as an Aboriginal Australian. Research has developed a term specifically to describe the Aboriginal Australian life expectancy – that is fourth world conditions – we live in third world conditions in a first world country”

In terms of finding some casual explanations we turn to racism as a concept and more specifically as a variant in trauma and attachment disorders. Professor Yin Paradies is our first expert and provides an inspirational opinion piece and our first discussion forum on the impacts of racism and impacts on Aboriginal Australians and is a world leader in this much neglected field. Professor Paradies’ research has been able to determine the health and mental health based impacts of these experiences and we are privileged to provide this for you. We also know that experiences associated with racism are likely to lead to negative ‘black’ identity formation (Cross, 1971) and poor self-concept which is then passed onto future generations (Westerman, 2003) which is explored in our analysis of attachment theory and relevance within the Aboriginal Australian context.

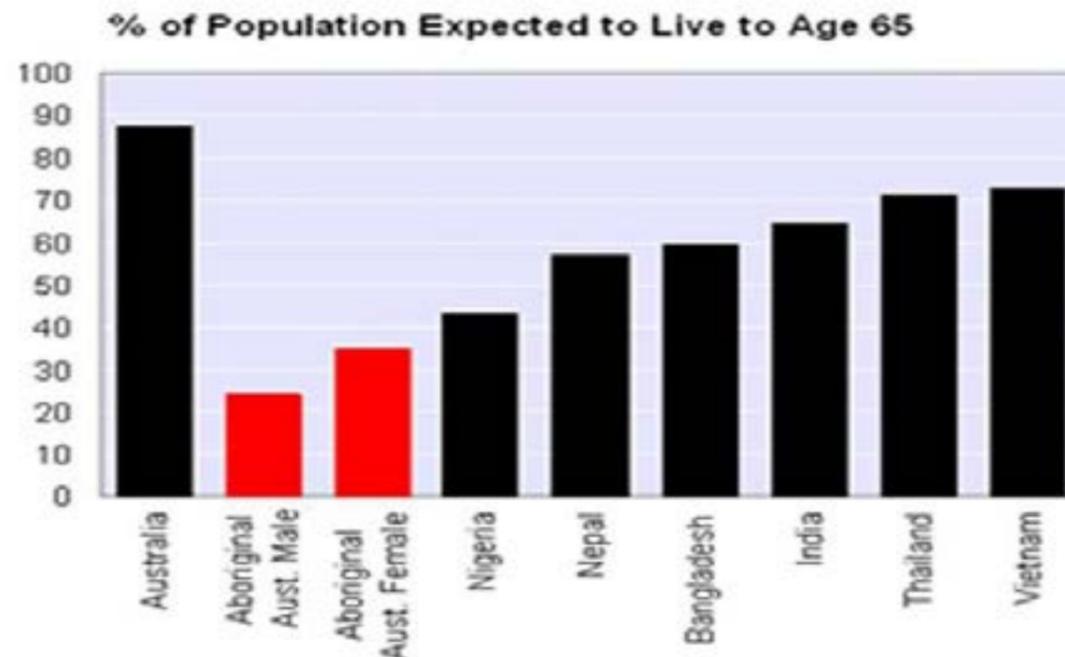
Cross (1971) first described the process of Black Identity Formation and was largely concerned with racial/ethnic identity theory and the negative effects of Western thought and science on the psychology of black people. It offers an important construct for therapists who work with Aboriginal people who are struggling with a sense of cultural identity. Positive cultural identity has known links to positive mental health, health and education outcomes and approaches that facilitate this development have the potential to address significant risk factors in the development of attachment and trauma.

Future issues will explore within group racism otherwise known as lateral violence an area which has only just been receiving the attention it needs. This refers to racism towards our own mob which has been an ‘untouchable’ subject but which requires more exploration. Statistics are showing us that up to 95% of Aboriginal people experience lateral violence. The Emerging Leaders focus is part of this desire to stem this flow – to ensure that we celebrate each other as a method of disrupting the flow of lateral violence into the next generations. Dr Marjad Page is our first ‘emerging leader’ and he represents all that is great and positive about the possibility of change. I am sure that the people of Mount Isa would never thought that this was possible in one generation. We need to celebrate the achievements of this generation, support them, encourage them and nurture them. Hence, my ‘Mentor Challenge’ at the end of this message!

According to Richard Frankland Lateral violence includes: The organised, harmful behaviours that we do to each other collectively as part of an oppressed group: within our families; within our organisations and; within our communities. When we are consistently oppressed we live with great fear and great anger and we often turn on those who are closest to us

Jilya will also focus on programs which exist in environments in which there has historically been great need and limited success. This addition we highlight the Hope for Health retreats and applaud their ingenuity and drive in achieving such a great approach to health and wellbeing. We are excited about the potential for this program to address many of the chronic health needs which are often part of the differential diagnosis associated with mental health conditions. The section ‘Talking Two Way’ will provide non-Indigenous perspectives of working in remote communities and quite simply is there to encourage the journey. We are very passionate about debunking the myth that non-Indigenous people cannot be effective in working with Aboriginal people. We commence with Andy Reed, a young idealistic

The intergenerational impacts



school teacher who probably had all of the odds stacked against him in terms of falling in love with Aboriginal culture when he moved from the big city of Melbourne to the remote community of Yakanarra. He simply wanted to make a difference and now blogs regularly about his experiences. I was inspired by his story due to its potential to encourage others to simply ‘have a go’ which is a great place to start. The focus of this is to share the merging of cultural and clinical expertise and evidence based practice with our members. To achieve this is to achieve equity in access to best practice mental health programs and services for our people. A truly exciting possibility and one which I hope you will all embrace as we try to navigate our way through this challenge.

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The launch of something so significant inevitably takes me back to my early days

as a young idealistic 15 year old who decided emphatically that I ‘wanted to be a psychologist’. Of course this was a very ‘normal’ thing for an Aboriginal kid growing up in the remote Pilbara area of Western Australia to do. It was even more daunting given that I had to do most of my study by ‘school of the air’ – effectively teaching myself. I still recall the day when I was offered a place at the University of Western Australia to study psychology. This was someone who had never seen a library; never caught a bus; and the first lecture I attended was around 100 times the population of my home town. The culture shock was significant. I lasted three years and it is fair to say, left with my tail between my legs questioning whether I could or wanted to be a psychologist. I spent seven years working through the regions of Kalgoorlie and central desert communities and finally was able to start to reconcile the benefit of science merged with culture.....

Obviously the journey that little kid with a dream to where I am now means that anything

is now possible and that excites me for this current and future generations. When my mother was born, she was not a citizen of this country and did not become so until she attended Port Hedland court in 1964. Never in her lifetime would she have thought it possible to raise 5 children who have all achieved considerable success and had opportunities that she never had available to her. I was also VERY fortunate to have been looked after and mentored by so many of my people and also non-Aboriginal people who saw something in me and so my 'Mentor Challenge' to you all!

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