Community education and training in Victoria’s Culturally Diverse Communities

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Alzheimer’s Australia Vic

- Education
- Support
- Advocacy
- Information

Support to all Victorian families, carers and health professionals.
Alzheimer’s Australia Vic Consumer Advisory Committee

• Advocates on dementia issues
• Advice and guidance to Alzheimer's Australia Vic
• Consumer perspectives on policy papers, submissions, services, resources, plans or projects
• Supports awareness raising campaigns
• Supports surveys or focus group interviews

Primrose White: CAC Chair
Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria

A peak body that was established in 1975

• A membership organisation with over 200 members, representing more than 60 ethnicities

• ECCV advocates and lobbies all levels of government for ethno-specific and multicultural welfare and community-based agencies and communities

• focus on improved aged care for seniors with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
About the Elder Abuse project

To empower, inform and resource culturally diverse seniors, and ethnic community support services, by raising awareness about seniors’ rights and elder abuse prevention, including the role of Seniors Rights Victoria and how to access this and other supports.

6 communities over 3 years (2 per year)

June 2012 – May 2015
Serbian Advisory Group

Membership:
• Centre for Cultural Diversity & Ageing
• Consumer Advocacy Group, Alzheimer’s Australia
• Serbian Community Association of Australia
• Serbian Social Services & Support
• Serbian Voice newspaper
• Jelena Tomic, Eastern Health
• Dr. Jelena Radosavljevic (private practice)

Met four times June 2014 – to present
Why target ethnic communities?

No evidence that elder abuse is more prevalent in ethnic communities, however:

- more hidden in ethnic communities than in general population
- Cases of suspected elder abuse for seniors from migrant backgrounds is increasing (ECCV consultation 08/09)

We need:

- culturally responsive ethnic community education
- Culturally responsive services and supports for older people from migrant backgrounds experiencing elder abuse

To do this we need to meaningfully understand the context for older people from migrant backgrounds in Australia.
Principles for community education

• Narratives designed to draw out the most pressing issues, plus the attitudes and values that underpin them

• Working with where community is at – narrative based discussion in *first language* to get the conversation started in a way that empowers the older person.

• Get the language right – how to discuss elder abuse

• “Whole of family” approach - discussion about rights reframed to a holistic whole family approach

• Importance of *ethnic and multicultural organisations* and bilingual workers

• Use of *ethnic media outlets*
Factors to consider for older people of migrant backgrounds

Universal issues associated with ageing

Cultural worldview

Impact of migration

Cultural and/or religious beliefs, attitudes, values (often assumptions)

When and why? Australian context upon arrival? Language and cultural difference to Australia?
Increasing our understanding

• Migration context
  – Who came? (literacy, assets, education)
  – On what visa?
  – Length of time in Australia?
  – Impact of settlement experience on community?
  – Increased intergenerational conflict

• Dominant cultural beliefs and related stigma

• Prevalent community concerns re elder abuse
Serbian community: migration context

Post-war migration

• Many did not learn English (16% speak English not well or not at all) - parents dependent on children

• Older generation have low levels of literacy in their own language.

• Lack of settlement services – may have experienced strong racism and hostility and not have had much connection to the mainstream (may affect willingness to seek help or receive services)

Skilled migration in the 1980s

• Motivated to provide a better life for their children

• There may be a sense of entitlement in adult children, “inheritance impatience”

• Family networks may be smaller – process of migration fragments families

Refugees and humanitarian entrants in the 1990s.

• Impact of trauma, loss may be felt in later life

• “Old before their time”
Milena’s story

When caring gets too much

Dijana cares for her two young children, as well as for her mother Milena who has dementia. Milena is becoming increasingly forgetful and confused. Sometimes she is agitated and frightens the children. Although Dijana has always been able to communicate with her mother, lately she has been difficult to understand. Dijana doesn’t get much rest, and her husband Andrej has no patience with Milena.

He often locks Milena in her room when visitors arrive, and refuses to take her on family outings. Dijana and Andrej have argued about Milena’s behaviour, including her repetitive comments and questions as well as the embarrassment she causes in the company of friends. Dijana feels very tired and overwhelmed.

Aim: To increase understanding and recognition of elder abuse related to stress in the care relationship. To increase knowledge of culturally relevant services that can provide support and break down stigma that may prevent people seeking help.
Underlying issues in this story

• Stigma around accepting help outside of the family
• Stigma around disability and dementia.
• Values around carer’s role eg. Cultural pressure to keep caring
• Role of the extended family
• Lack of awareness of options
• Lack of appropriate services
• Coping with change eg. as individual reverts to an earlier time
• Intergenerational conflict
• Dementia and ageing, eg reverting to original languages, anxiety resulting from traumatic war experience
Community Education

What happens when relationships with friends and family go wrong?

A Serbian community education resource kit for elder abuse prevention
Bilingual educators
Questions?

For more information:
www.eccv.org.au
FOR MORE INFORMATION
CONTACT ALZHEIMER’S AUSTRALIA

NATIONAL DEMENTIA HELPLINE
1800 100 500
AN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

TRANSLATING AND INTERPRETING SERVICE
131 450

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