

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

SOCIAL WORKER AS A MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM MEMBER: EMBEDDING 3 C'S (COMPETENCE, CONFIDENCE AND COMPASSION) IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN MENTAL HEALTH.

A Francis,

James Cook University, Australia

abraham.francis@jcu.edu.au

Knowledge about mental health and the skills to work effectively with clients who have mental health problems are basic requirements to contemporary social work practice. It has been estimated that approximately 45 per cent of Australians will experience a mental illness at some point in their lives. Social workers have been very active in supporting people with mental health issues. However, it requires the involvement of 'whole-of-government' responses especially from public health, multidisciplinary mental health teams and from specialised fields of cognate practice. This presentation focuses on the role of the social worker as a multidisciplinary team member who plays an important part in the assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of clients within the context of their specific employment. Unfortunately, although social workers are key to the provision of a range of these services, their roles in this regard are often challenged, confronted and undermined in the workplace. The question therefore is how can these problems be addressed? How can social work education, for example, work to alleviate these difficulties? How can the profile of social workers be strengthened? These are some of the pertinent questions that the author will address in this presentation. The author will argue that by embedding the 3 C's in social work education, the profession will be able to strengthen the ways of engagement with the clients and families and also become an active and effective member of a multidisciplinary team.

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN MENTAL HEALTH: CHANGE THROUGH INTER-PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION

A Francis¹, Dr Narayan Gopalkrishnan¹, Dr Amy Forbes² and Claire Swift³

¹ Social work Lecturer, James Cook University

² Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning, James Cook University

³ Librarian, James Cook University

abraham.francis@jcu.edu.au

The impacts of mental health issues are widely documented in the literature, and Social Work as a profession is challenged to respond effectively to these issues. Strengthening social work education in mental health is accordingly gaining in importance so as to enable social work students to respond effectively to these challenges through appropriate knowledge, skills, and the ability to apply these in practice. This paper presents one approach towards strengthening social work education as utilised in the 'Social Worker as a Member of a Multidisciplinary Team'

project at James Cook University. It is based on the premise that inter-professional education and collaboration facilitates the work of knowledge translation and developing effective practice resulting in improved mental health outcomes. Through a collaborative process, the research team identified the areas of Competence, Compassion, and Confidence as the areas that needed to be strengthened in the curriculum to meet the current needs and standards of professional practice of social workers in mental health; and also identified some methods towards embedding these in the social work curriculum. The paper closes with highlighting the need for such interprofessional collaborations and the synergies that they bring to curriculum development as well as presenting some of the areas of further research that have emerged through the process.

PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT: REFLECTIONS OF PRACTITIONERS

J Baker, S Green

Department of Social Work, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

jessicabaker3@gmail.com

Parent education programmes have been identified as intervention strategies which address numerous child and family problems in South Africa. This study highlighted the importance of empowering parents through knowledge and skill development in order to positively invest in the future generations of South Africa.

The aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of how practitioners experience the facilitation of parent education programmes aimed towards early childhood development by utilising a social learning and cognitive behavioural approaches.

Early childhood development is a field which has emerged on the agenda of the helping professions, such as social work, psychology and education.

A combination of a quantitative and qualitative research approach was used in this study in order to describe the social phenomenon of parent education programmes for early childhood development. Practitioners delivering parent education programmes in the Cape Metropole in South Africa were selected to participate in the study. Practitioners were given the opportunity to share their reflections on their experiences of facilitating these intervention programmes.

The study was meaningfully anchored in a social development approach that is of relevance for social work intervention in South Africa. The focus on parent empowerment is innovative and original, and well in line with the assumptions of a social development approach.

South Africa has recently begun to explore the innovative avenue of parent education through group-based parenting programmes. The enhancement of parents' capabilities through these programmes are seen as an asset for promoting social development and advancing legislation on childhood development.