

CLINICAL INDIGENOUS HEALTH — POINT OF CARE REFERENCE

A clinical point of care resource to assist family physicians in optimizing care for Indigenous patients

IMPAIRMENT OF THE CLINICAL PROCESS

Equity gaps in clinical care for Indigenous patients arise through three key mechanisms:

Inadequate Clinical Suspicion

- ▶ Unrecognized external bias
- ▶ Misattribution to stereotypes
- ▶ Unrecognized higher pre-test probability

Inadequate Assessment

- ▶ Inadequate physical environment
- ▶ Inadequate history and physical exam
- ▶ Inadequate investigation

Inadequate Management

- ▶ Poor rapport decreasing adherence
- ▶ Disproportionate focus on health behavior
- ▶ Inadequate use of resources
- ▶ Failure to mitigate barriers

HOLD APPROPRIATE CLINICAL SUSPICION

Recognize External Bias

- ▶ Bias against the patient may be transmitted from other providers and staff
- ▶ Evidence of built-in structural bias (e.g. CTAS scoring, pulse oximetry)
- ▶ Consider how this may affect your clinical suspicion

Recognize Impact of Stereotypes

- ▶ Evidence of widespread anti-Indigenous stereotyping
- ▶ Stereotypes have been shown to affect clinician decision-making

Recognize Higher Pre-Test Probability

- ▶ Prevalence of numerous chronic diseases and cancers are higher among Indigenous peoples
- ▶ Social and structural barriers disproportionately affect Indigenous peoples
- ▶ Consider how this affects your pre-test probability of underlying pathology in new symptom presentations

OPTIMIZE ASSESSMENT

Earn Trust as an Explicit Objective

- ▶ Acknowledge prior poor experiences
- ▶ Begin by meeting immediate needs
- ▶ Explicitly commit to help
- ▶ Explain your assessment process

Convey a Caring Attitude

- ▶ Eye contact, facial expression, posture
- ▶ Affect and tone of voice
- ▶ Hearing the whole patient
- ▶ Your response matters

Be Transparent, Consistent, Predictable

- ▶ Explain questions on sensitive topics or stereotypes
- ▶ Explain physical exam, especially if uncomfortable
- ▶ Explain investigations, treatments, and referrals
- ▶ Keep promises; take responsibility for errors
- ▶ Use guidelines for consistency
- ▶ Outline boundaries and expectations in advance

Commit to Communication

- ▶ Do not attribute communication difficulties to 'cultural issues'
- ▶ Silence may not mean agreement, consent, or lack of concern

Be Mindful of Language

- ▶ Avoid questioning that implies assumptions or stereotypes
- ▶ Chart only what benefits the patient, to avoid transmitting bias

Perform a Physical Exam

- ▶ Part of accurate assessment
- ▶ Validates patient concern and builds trust
- ▶ Increases acceptance of recommended treatment

Mind the Power Differential

- ▶ Patients may lose trust when there is prescriptiveness, authoritarianism, or coercion

Investigate Appropriately

- ▶ Use clinical guidelines to standardize assessment
- ▶ Base investigations on assessment, not assumptions

OPTIMIZE MANAGEMENT

Manage Pain and Symptoms

- ▶ Analgesia is often under-prescribed
- ▶ Base pain treatment on patient assessment, not assumptions or stereotypes

Support Cultural Needs

- ▶ Invite and support cultural practices in care
- ▶ Inquire about additional supports: extended family, Elders, Community Health Representatives, community nurses, Indigenous Liaison workers

Opportunity for Collaboration and Choice

- ▶ Discuss preferences for care
- ▶ Explore barriers

Avoid Termination of Care

- ▶ Emphasize collaboration and de-escalation

- ▶ Elicit priorities and hopes for treatment
- ▶ Obtain informed consent for all treatments and procedures
- ▶ Carefully consider circumstances before ejecting patients from care

Provide Written Information

- ▶ Include diagnosis, follow up, patient resources, symptom management, and referral information

PATIENT CARE RESOURCES

Clinical Tools

- ▶ **The Poverty Tool** bccfp.bc.ca/why-join/poverty-tool/
- ▶ **FNHA Health Benefits Guide** fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-Health-Benefits-Guide.pdf
- ▶ **Pharmacare Plan W**
<https://pharmacareformularysearch.gov.bc.ca>
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/health-drug-coverage/pharmacare/planw-otc-meds.pdf>
- ▶ **Jordan's Principle** <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1568396042341/1568396159824>

Crisis Lines (24/7)

- ▶ **Kuu-us Crisis Line**
Youth: 250-723-2040 | Adult: 250-723-4050
- ▶ **Metis Crisis Line:** 1-833-638-4722
- ▶ **Hope for Wellness Helpline:** 1-855-242-3310
- ▶ **Residential School Resolution Health Support:** 1-866-925-4419

FNHA Services

- ▶ **First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day** (8:30–16:30, 7 days/week): 1-855-344-3800
- ▶ **FNHA Virtual Substance Use and Psychiatry Service** (Mon–Fri)
Substance Use & Psychiatry referral forms at fnha.ca
- ▶ **FNHA Quality Care and Safety**
Assists patients and families navigating issues from any health care encounter in BC
1-844-935-1044 | quality@fnha.ca

KEY SUMMARY

1. Providing health care that integrates personal context may take more time. **View this as a legitimate use of time.**
2. Systemic racism occurs when a system meant to serve the public, while functioning as intended, **produces different outcomes based on the system user's race.**
3. The mere absence of ill-will is **not sufficient to ensure equitable care.**

REFERENCES AND FURTHER LEARNING

Clinical Practice Standards

- ▶ CPSBC Practice Standard – Indigenous Cultural Safety, Cultural Humility and Anti-Racism cpsbc.ca/files/pdf/PSG-Indigenous-Cultural-Safety-Cultural-Humility-and-Anti-racism.pdf
- ▶ In Plain Sight Report engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/613/2020/11/In-Plain-Sight-Summary-Report.pdf
- ▶ Trauma-Informed Practice Guide bccewh.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/2013_TIP-Guide.pdf
- ▶ Indigenous Health Primer (Royal College) royalcollege.ca/content/dam/document/about/indigenous-health-primer-e.pdf
- ▶ EQUIP Resources equiphealthcare.ca/resources/

Video

- ▶ How to get the most out of health care visits: Advice from patients to providers youtu.be/5H4yU0G63FY

Courses and Learning Series

- ▶ Royal College – Walking Together: Online course on colonialism, determinants of health, and systemic inequities cpd.royalcollege.ca/learn/courses/259/walking-together-understanding-indigenous-health
- ▶ ICS Collaborative Learning Series: Webinar series with national experts on cultural safety icscollaborative.com
- ▶ FNHA Cultural Humility Webinar Series fnha.ca/wellness/cultural-humility
- ▶ U of A Indigenous Canada Online Course coursera.org/learn/indigenous-canada
- ▶ Cancer Care Ontario – Indigenous Cultural Safety Course: Comprehensive course on a variety of topics cancercareontario.ca/en/resources-first-nations-inuit-metis-first-nations-inuit-metis-courses