



FoNS Improvement Insights

Culturagram: Developing and Implementing a Culturally and Ethnically Sensitive Family Assessment Tool for People Living with Dementia and their Families

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Project background

There are currently about 800,000 people in the UK with a diagnosis of dementia and the number is set to increase with a growing population of older people. Recent national policies and initiatives have focussed on the specific needs of people with dementia and their families which stem from diversity, including ethnicity, age and religion. Admiral Nurses are specialists in dementia care, who are funded by Dementia UK, but work within the NHS. Whilst they strive to work in a culturally and ethnically sensitive manner, there was no assessment tool which addresses these important issues in use in the UK. The project leader identified a diagrammatic aid to assessment developed in the USA called the 'Culturagram', and wanted to work with stakeholders to identify if it could be adapted for use in the UK.

Aim and objectives of the project

The aim of the project was to improve the experiences of the assessment process for those people from a black and minority ethnic background (BME) living with a dementia in one community trust in outer London by implementing and adapting the Culturagram. To achieve this aim, the following objectives were identified. To:

- Enable staff participation in the project
- Capture and understand the service user and carer experience of assessment
- Adapt the Culturagram for use in the UK
- Create a self-assessment version of the Culturagram for service users/carers
- Pilot the use of the Culturagram/self-assessment version
- Evaluate the use of the Culturagram within the assessment process

Key activities and outcomes of the project

A number of approaches were used to engage staff, service users and carers in the adaptation and piloting of the Culturagram and self-assessment version.

- The steering group

A steering group comprised of Admiral Nurses, team leaders, the medical lead, the social work lead and the Nurse Director, met five times within the period of the project to discuss and monitor progress, offer expertise and leadership as well as provide key links to the trust's governing structures.

- Staff views and values

The project leader facilitated a values clarification exercise to develop a common vision of the purpose of assessment in dementia care. The participants (n=18) from across the multidisciplinary team worked first individually and then in groups

to develop shared statements. An example of a statement is: *'We believe the ultimate purpose of assessment is: to collaborate and build rapport in order to gather information, identify needs, assess risk and devise an appropriate action plan.'*

- Claims, concerns and issues

A claims, concerns and issues exercise was facilitated by the project leader with the multidisciplinary team (n=18) to gain the views of staff (both positive and negative) about the Culturagram. This approach enabled staff to discuss issues and share ideas.

- Service user and carer interviews

Using existing carer support networks to recruit participants, the project leader interviewed four service users and their partners about how they felt before, during and after their assessment appointment at the memory clinic using the emotional touchpoint approach. The participants' choices of words and brief notes were collected during the interviews; these were reviewed and themed by the project leader and fed back to the steering group. This feedback enabled the steering group to really understand the service user experience.

- Adaptation of Culturagram and self-assessment version

To foster a sense of ownership a further staff workshop (n=18) was held. Participants were asked to look at the Culturagram and consider each section in terms of the following prompts: What right do I have to ask these questions? How would I feel if someone asked me these questions? Why am I asking these questions? What will I do with the answers? Although complete consensus was not achieved, agreement was reached on a modified version that could be piloted. A self-assessment version was developed by the project leader and a carer.

- Piloting the Culturagram and self assessment version

Service users and staff were involved in a number of approaches to pilot the new assessments including role play, workshop discussions and piloting with volunteers. The revised Culturagram received a positive response and has enabled healthcare professionals to explore specific and personal cultural issues.

Implications for practice:

- The support of a more experienced mentor or external facilitator can enable practitioners to develop new skills and become confident using different techniques that enable the development of self and practice
- 'Emotional touchpoints' is a powerful technique for learning about service user experience
- When working as an external facilitator, it is important to recognise the importance of allocating time to build relationships and trust

A full project report including references can be accessed from: <http://www.fons.org/library/report-details.aspx?nstd=55736>

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