

Abstract Form

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Title of abstract: Wellness for Women (Cancer Support Project) by Bankstown Women's Health Centre & Fairfield Women's Health Centre

Authors: Operations Manager, Kerrie Newcombe and Project Worker, Juliette Kirkwood

Background:

The Wellness for Women project is one of the current programs at the Fairfield and Bankstown Women's Health Service which is funded through the cancer Institute NSW, under the innovation fund, addressing priority 6, 'Improving the experiences of people with cancer in multicultural communities'. Cancer research showed (University of Wollongong Phillipson, 2012) that the CALD community, have poorer outcomes than the general population, in regards to cancer.

Canterbury Bankstown and Fairfield City councils have a significant number of people from CALD communities with a significant amount of fear stemming from myths and beliefs, stigma and secrecy that create a barrier to accessing services. We believe that these barriers contribute to the poorer outcomes experienced by CALD communities effected by cancer. In addition there is fewer culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate supports for CALD communities effected by cancer despite the large multicultural population in south west Sydney.

Aims:

The innovative aims of the program are to:

- Address the myths and beliefs through education and awareness, including outreach sessions.
- Provide emotional support and healing from the trauma of treatment through cutting edge mind/body group therapy practice.

- Encourage healthy living during and after cancer diagnosis through mindfulness and yoga.
- Provide information and education on healthy living, treatments, and screening
- Provide services in a culturally and linguistically appropriate environment using bilingual facilitators in a women only safe space.
- Sustainability through the leadership training program which aims at creating informed mentors to go out into the CALD community and continue to provide support and information after funding expires.

Method:

A 2.5 hour weekly group facilitated by bi-lingual qualified experienced facilitators at Cabramatta and Bankstown sites during school terms. Weekly schedule includes Yoga, mindfulness, education, experiential mind/body practices, emotional support and a healthy lunch. Outreach sessions are offered twice per school term. The program started in July 2018 and has been growing with over 40 participants accessing the group from a variety of backgrounds.

Results:

The validated evaluations used in our Wellness for Women Project reported:

- 90% of women have experienced improved overall health and well-being.
- 90% of women experienced reduced stress.
- 100% of women felt more positive about their future.
- women who have never been screened, have now been screened.
- Increased awareness of the myths and beliefs surrounding cancer in their respective communities.

Implications that impact on your project:

The challenge of finding suitably qualified bilingual facilitators, and the challenge of creating effective referral pathways for this hard to reach population group.