Pain Management in Indigenous People: Through the Lens of Culture, Society and Medicine

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Declaration of Conflict of Interest

- NONE
Pain & Addictions- Indigenous Interaction

- Moose Factory
- CAMH Northern Ontario Aboriginal Engagement
- Bowmanville- Alderville FN, Scugog FN (Williams Treaties)
- Urban Aboriginal & Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) assessment and in conjunction with Pain & Chemical Dependency Clinic- CAMH
BURDEN OF INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA
Creating Distrust
INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

- Residential Schools
- 60’s Scoop
- History of Distrust (Institutions)

... Medical Model as a colonizing institution- treatment & research
BURDEN OF PAIN
Ontario & First Nations Communities
Burden of Pain

- 6 million Canadians suffer from pain (Canadian Pain Coalition, 2010)

- Nearly 40% of chronic pain patients suffer from depression as a result of living with chronic pain (Forde, 2007)
Pain in Primary Care

- Canada: Patients with CNCP typically first seek care in primary care settings at prevalence up to 33%. (Reid et al, 2002)

- Ontario: sample of respondents seeking primary care physicians  (Tripp et al. 2006)
  - 76% responded having some pain in the last 6 months
  - 49% responded that their pain was chronic pain
Numerous Agents...

- Duloxetine
- Venlafaxine
- Gabapentin
- Pregabalin
- Capsaicin
- Citalopram
- Tramadol
- Tapendatol
- Hydromorphone
- Buprenorphine
- Lidocaine
- Aspirin
- Acetaminophen
- Morphine
- Topiramate
- Oxycodone
- Carbamazepine
- ... and it goes on
But...

- Once chronic pain pathways have been established, we can only expect a **20%** reduction in pain intensity (CPC, 2010)

- **30%** can be considered a clinically important response (Forde, 2007)

- Significant barrier to effective management
Ontario has the highest rate of prescription Narcotic Use in Canada

Two to four times higher than any other province

Ontario babies born addicted to opioids higher than national average

- Ministry of Health & Long Term Care (2012)
Increased Burden of Pain

- The incidence of chronic pain is highest in Aboriginal households (StatsCan 2012)

- First Nations Regional Health Survey (2012) identified a higher prevalence of dental, ear and musculoskeletal pain among Aboriginal children and youth—supported in the broader literature…. Yet these children are less likely to be treated
Increased Burden of Pain… & Inequity

- 68th place on Human Development Index if only Canada’s First Nations communities are considered (Canadian UNICEF Committee, 2009)

- Involuntary cultural change & stress (Bartlett 2003) compounded by access to healthcare (Adelson 2005)
Misrepresentative Healthcare

- Increasingly, pain specific, team-based, services made available through tertiary care and specialist referral... Indigenous Canadians less likely to access these than other Canadians (MacDonald 2012)

- Health programs and services designed largely without input from indigenous people (Fontaine 2005)
Since 2001, Oxycontin prescription went from 1000 tablets per 1000 clients to 7,500 tablets per 1000 clients in 2007.

In 2007 for every 1000 FN, 898 opiate prescriptions were dispensed; 119 of these were for oxycodone.

- Ontario FN received more Rx for Opiates than the province (1.5 times more) but oxycodone was prescribed less.

Oxycontin prescription has since leveled off but short acting oxycodone prescriptions have continued to rise by about 200-500 tablets per 1000 clients aged 15 & over.
Communities tell alarming stories

- “One reserve of 600 residents had 30 to 40 per cent struggling with substance abuse,“

- “In another community of 166 adults, 85 per cent were addicted to opioids,“
  - Premier Kathleen Wynne
  (when she was Aboriginal Affairs Minister)

- Cat Lake & others have declared their own states of emergency since that time- 70-85% percent are addicted to prescription drugs.
UNDERSTANDING PAIN

Misalignment in research and reporting amongst First Nations
Indigenous Reporting of Pain

- Self-reported chronic pain levels among First Nations populations are high and... there is not always a clear organic cause to the pain (Wallace et al, 2015)
Wide Variances in Reporting

- Indigenous people suppress pain behaviours and are reluctant to discuss their pain experience with others possibly from the oppression experienced by Aboriginal peoples since colonization (Fenwick, 2005).

- (McGrath 2006) Work with Aboriginal people in Australia shows pain may be viewed by Indigenous people as a sign of human weakness leading to a tendency to not want to draw attention to their pain experience.
Pain & Trauma

- Chronic pain is closely tied to issues of trauma, including historical trauma and other psychosocial issues (Nelson et al, 2016)

- Higher rates of bodily pain in Aboriginal children with posttraumatic stress disorder (Buchwald et al, 2000)

- 765 (or 45 per cent) of 1,700 First Nations youth in one community said that pain issues kept them from participating in school, sports, and other extracurricular activities. Van der Woerd et al. (2005)
Lieberman & Eisenberger, Nature 2009
Insensitivity of standard pain assessment

- Western based pain assessment involves three areas of assessment; behavioural (crying, grimacing, etc.), physiological (heart rate, blood pressure, etc.) and self-report (Huguet et al., 2010; Jain, Yeluri, & Munshi, 2012).

- Native people express difficulties in reducing their experience of pain to numerical scores or other abstract scales (Jimenez et al, 2012)
Jimenez et al, 2011

- Indigenous people “perceive medical providers as uninterested in their pain, and they lack faith in providers' abilities to treat it.”
  - Conversely, medical providers perceive these patients as exaggerating their pain, a perception that detracts from patient-provider interaction.
  - In other encounters medical providers receive little expression in the context of pain reporting to be “stoicism” (Latimer, 2011)

- Minimal research has been completed to evaluate whether these assessment strategies are appropriate for use with Aboriginal people
Many people live in multigenerational households. It is not unusual for a grandmother to be the primary caregiver and to pass on her own beliefs about pain and health care practices (Smylie, 2001).
Northern Pain Scale

- Dr. Jacqueline Ellis developed and validated the Northern Pain Scale (NorthPS) (Ellis et al., 2011) by adapting the western WBFPS scale using Inuit language and culture.

- The WBFPS faces were redrawn to reflect an Inuk person’s expression and their style of dress and then translated into Inuktitut. In Ellis’ study, Inuktitut participants from an Eastern Canadian community compared the NorthPS with WBFPS.
Northern Pain Scale

- Younger children preferred the WBFPS
- Participants over 40 years of age chose the NorthPS.

- (Ellis et al.) Inuit people have well-developed spatial abilities that would be more in tune with the “northern images” providing a more visually rich experience; this was thought to be more relevant when compared to the linearity of the numerical rating scale.
PAIN & DRUG SEEKING
Opiates- the perfect storm
Lieberman & Eisenberger, Nature 2009
Neurobiological Basis of Drug-Seeking

Adapted from Kalivas and Volkow (2005) Am J Psychiatry 162:1403-1413
PAIN TREATMENT

Indigenous Advantage (?)
The other face of pain...

- Pain is not always perceived as a negative experience

- “All people in every culture rid themselves of pain with medicines [...] but traditional peoples believe that pain has a message for us, and that we are foolish not to listen to it- James David Audlin (Distant Eagle)
The other face of pain...

- Many First Nations use traditional practices that at times cause painful experiences, including practices such as Sweat Lodge Ceremonies, Fasting, and Sundances.

- Emmett Peters, Mi’kmaq Elder (Journal of Aboriginal Helath Nov, 2012)- “pain is something that cannot always be avoided so is something we must embrace”
Mino-Bimaadiziwin or the “good life” requires working toward a balance in our physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional parts of our being. This way of thinking has been around for centuries.

(Anderson, 2005; Garrett, 1999; Rheault, 1999)
Hand drum- traditional tool
(Rego, HOSW 2015)

“our shared beliefs that practising our traditions within an urban community helps us to promote our cultural identity, and that participating in a hand-drumming circle is one way for Aboriginal women to support one another.

Hand Drumming: Health-Promoting Experiences of Aboriginal Women from a Northern Ontario Urban Community (Goudreau, 2008)
“Since the drum is often the only instrument used in our sacred rites, I should perhaps tell you here why it is especially sacred and important to us. It is because the round form of the drum represents the whole universe, and its steady strong beat is the pulse, the heart, throbbing at the center of the universe. It is the voice of Wakan Tanka (Great Spirit), and this sound stirs us and helps us to understand the mystery and power of all things.”

- Black Elk, an Oglala Sioux holy man made famous by John Neihardt’s book Black Elk Speaks
A process of synchronization between the frontal and lower areas of the brain which integrates nonverbal information from lower brain structures into the frontal cortex.

When this happens, there is production of “feelings of insight, understanding, integration, certainty, conviction, and truth, which surpass ordinary understandings and tend to persist long after the experience, often providing foundational insights for religious and cultural traditions.”

"The drum connected me with something I hadn’t known before, and I felt a huge lump in my throat that was equal parts sorrow, gratitude and joy. When I was coaxed out for my first inter-tribal dance, I closed my eyes and felt the drum and began to move my feet. It was magic. I could dance. It would be a few years before I was graced with the drum teachings of my people, but there was a spiritual connection nonetheless. Once I felt the drum in my chest, the hollowness I’d carried as a displaced Indian kid was gone. In its place was belonging."

Meeg wetch, Thank you

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