Strengthening Our Roots: One Region's Experience with Traditional Medicine and Healthcare Settings

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2011 Advances in Indian Health
May 2011
Objectives

• Review elements that may comprise Traditional Indian Medicine (TIM)
• Consider approaches you might take as a clinician to support community-driven methods that incorporate TIM in either reservation or urban healthcare settings
What is traditional medicine?

• The sum total of knowledge, skills, & practices indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement of treatment of physical and mental illness

World Health Organization
What is Traditional Indian Medicine?

• An approach to wellness, preventive, and illness care
• Goal is holistic balance: mind, body, emotions, spirit
• Involves individuals in the context of family, community, world, & culture
  – Community & natural world often ignored in our approaches
What is Traditional Indian Medicine?

• Components vary by tribe and region
• May incorporate concepts of:
  – Circle symbolism
  – Respect
  – Honor
  – Restoring harmonious relationships
Why are these practices important?

They are part of our national mandate within the Indian Health system

Traditional Cultural Advocacy Program, 1994

“*It is the policy of the IHS to facilitate the right of American Indian and Alaska Native people to their beliefs and health practices as defined by the tribe ’s or village ’s traditional culture*.”
Some elements of traditional medicine

• Relationship to land & season
• Indigenous language
• Food & drink
• Herbs
• Spiritual practices
  – Fasting
  – Purification
  – Offerings
  – Prayer
Some elements of traditional medicine

- Mental attitude towards life
- Storytelling
- Song
- Dances
- Responsibility for sacred items
- Healers & elders
- Ceremony
How do we make space for culture and history in Indian health care?

One Region’s Approach

- Healing & protecting land & water
- Access to traditional foods
- Access to traditional medicines
- Access to healers as health professional mentors
- Intertribal healing
The art of healing comes from nature, not from the physician. Therefore, the physician must start from nature, with an open mind.

Philippus Aureolus Paracelsus
1493-1541
“Dix dx?uGusaA ti?e? swatixted
“The earth is our first teacher”
- Vi Hilbert, Upper Skagit Tribe

• Interdependence: human health with earth
• Native law tells us to stay connected to & care for our place
  – Strengthen well-being of our communities
  – Reverse impact of colonization
• Requires ecologic & spiritual approaches
We need to get out of our offices
Land & Water Restoration

• Watersheds
  – Snoqualmie Tribe (WA)
• Estuaries
  – Swinomish Tribe (WA)
  – Salmon habitat
• Health personnel involvement
Protecting Land

• Stillaguamish Tribe (WA) enterprise
• Native plants for restoration work
• Medicinal plants

http://stillaguamish.com/banksavers.asp
Comprehensive Ecologic Preservation

• Confederated Tribes of Umatilla (OR)
• Following their law: “original instructions”
• Protecting men and women’s traditional foods
  – From salmon & elk to roots & huckleberries
• “Eat the landscape, not a pyramid”
  – Supports a way of life

http://www.umatilla.nsn.us/dnr.html
Access to Traditional Foods

• Puget Sound Traditional Food and Diabetes Project
  – Tulalip Tribes, Muckleshoot Tribe, King County (WA), and Burke Museum (Seattle)
  – Assessing therapeutic value of native food diets in treatment & prevention
  – Involves archeologists, health professionals, & tribal members

http://faculty.washington.edu/plape/tradfoods/tradfood.htm
Research: Pre-Columbian Diet in the Pacific Northwest

- Lape & Kopperl study, University of Washington, 2007
- Puget Sound middens 2000-5000 years old
  - Over 80 types of shellfish
  - 70 fish, shallow to deep sea
  - 50 mammals: marine & terrestrial
  - 20 berries, 5 roots, 10 medicine plants
Accessing Traditional Foods

• Regional Consortia
  – State and Federal land managers (WA) with tribes
  – Conferences
  – Uphold treaty rights for gathering, hunting, fishing

• National conferences
  – Society for Applied Anthropology, 2011
Role of Tribal Colleges

• Northwest Indian College (Bellingham, WA)
• Diabetes Prevention Through Traditional Plants project
  – Monthly meetings in tribal communities state-wide
  – Protecting the knowledge; elders/healers attend
  – I/T/U health professionals invited
• Practical medicine making & traditional food harvesting & preparation
Text useful to clinicians:

Wild Rose and Western Red Cedar: The Gift of Northwest Plants
Elise Krohn, 2007

Training tribal cooks in traditional food prep
Access to plant medicines: Northwest Indian Treatment Center

- Squaxin Island Tribe: Elma, WA
- Medicine wheel herb & food garden on site
- Cared for by inpatient clients
- “Self-medication” with safer alternatives
- Empowerment, cultural reconnection
- “Eating the seasons”

http://www.squaxinisland.org/government/northwest-indian-treatment-center/
Access to plant medicines

• Medicinal plant garden at Snoqualmie Tribal Health Services
  – Adjacent to clinic; reflects traditional health concepts
  – Promotes TIM discussions with patients & medical staff
  – Dispensing
  – Liaison with healers
Other Model Gardens

• Nisqually Tribal Cultural Center (WA)
  – Basketry, food, medicine
• Skokomish Tribe (WA)
• Makah Tribe (WA)
  • Ethno-botanical trail
Cultural Resource Preservation

• Field Guides
  – Colville Confederated Tribes (WA)

• Medicinal Plant Class
  – Salish Kootenai Tribal College (MT)
  – Intellectual property protection
Access to healers & elders as health professional mentors

From childhood education to post-graduate level

“Don’t leave your elders behind”

-Peter Jacob (Yupik)
Alaska Rural Behavioral Health Training Academy

- Indigenous Elders on core teaching faculty
- Active guidance
  - In classroom at U of AK Fairbanks
  - Distance learning via teleconference
  - Out-of-state meetings with diploma faculty

http://www.uaf.edu/arbhta/
Pathways Into Health

www.PathwaysIntoHealth.org

- Collaboration of 150+ individuals & organizations
- Tribal, academic and I/T/U
- Interdisciplinary
- Focus on health care & health education pipeline for AI/ANs
- Cultural attunement strategies
Traditional Healers as Mentors

• University of Washington School of Medicine, Indian Health Pathway Curriculum
  – Began 1992, All 5 WWAMI states
• Traditional Indian Medicine Clerkship
  – Year 4 students
  – Integrates culture and medicine

https://catalyst.uw.edu/workspace/dacosta/9651/47950
Medical Education

- University of British Columbia Family Medicine Residency Program
- Expanded SOAP model for outpatient assessments
  - Includes 4 medicine wheel elements
  - Spiritual & cultural factors addressed
  
  http://www.familymed.ubc.ca/carms/sites/aboriginal.htm
On-the-Job Mentoring

• Puyallup Tribal Health Authority (WA)
• Required TIM orientation
• Cultural competency in performance eval
• Ongoing quarterly all-staff meetings on TIM topics
  – Visiting healers from various tribal traditions
On-the-Job Mentoring

• Seattle Indian Health Board (WA)
  – Traditional Health Liaison
  – Credentialing for healers
• Monthly intercultural community traditional medicine gatherings
  – Target audience is health professionals
• Traditional tobacco pow-wows
• Regular clinic smudging in some tribal facilities
Mentoring IHS Staff

Apsáalooke Health Advocate Project (MT)

- Montana State University & Crow Tribe partnership with IHS
- Community-based 1:1 partnership with community mentor & medical staff
  - Meet twice a month to build trust
  - Tribal-specific cultural education

http://www.montana.edu/messengers/advprgm.html
Returning to Our Roots: Canoe Journey

• 22\textsuperscript{nd} annual gathering in 2011
  – Over 10,000 attend; 2-3 weeks long
• All Salish Sea tribes, U.S. & Canada
• Canoe families, Host nation
  – Youth involvement; sobriety mandatory
• Protocols
  – Song, dance, language revitalization
  – Cultural exchange
Canoe Journey

- Power of group healing from intergenerational trauma
- Ceremony
- Medical support
  - Herbal first aid
  - Traveling clinician helpers
“We are lifting each other up”

Connie McCloud
Puyallup Tribe cultural coordinator & canoe skipper
Coast Salish Gathering

• Western Washington & British Columbia First Nations Chiefs policy group
• Restore & protect natural resources of Salish Sea
• Health of traditional foods a priority
• Water sample monitoring internationally during Canoe Journey
  – Seafood focus

http://www.coastsalishgathering.com
Storytelling

• Wisdom of the Elders, Inc.
  – 501(c)(3) non-profit, Portland, OR
  – Record & preserve oral traditions
  – NW Indian Storytellers Association
    • Annual gathering

• “Discovering Our Story”
  • 12 culturally tailored multimedia web modules
  • Mental health, addictions, DM2, domestic violence

http://discoveringourstory.org/home
Native Youth Enrichment Program

- Culturally based urban program to promote youth in science, technology, engineering, & math
- Digital storytelling used
- “Lessons of Traditional foods” focus
  - Elder interviews

http://www.iwri.org/nyep
Language

- Lushootseed classes
- Regular invitations to all tribal employees of Snoqualmie
- Free
- “Reawakening language of the land”
How do we make space for culture and history in Indian health care?

What can you do to support TIM as a clinician?

• Broaden your definition of health
  – And your SOAP assessments
• Show up at community events
  – Beyond health fairs
• Learn more about culture in your area
  – Environmental & traditional food related activities
  – Plant medicine
• Find elders & healers as mentors
  – “Where are your elders?”
  – Connect to tribal colleges
What can you do to support TIM as a clinician?

• Support those who support preservation of natural & cultural resources
  – Foods served at clinic functions?
  – Reinforce TIM concepts learned elsewhere
    • “Eating the landscape”; storytelling web modules

• Create cultural in-services
  – How do you give input as to your needs?

• Consider resources outside the usual medical box
  – Interdisciplinary, Web based
Returning to Our Roots

- Improves outcomes for our communities
- Keeps us grounded in Indigenous core values
- “We need to get out of our offices”
“I hope and I pray we can get a connection... together, we can save lives”

Isadore Tom
Traditional healer, Tulalip Tribes, WA

To a group of health professions students, 2009
Consider approaches you might take as a clinician to support community-driven methods that incorporate traditional Indian medicine in either reservation or urban healthcare settings.
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Seattle Indian Health Board Family Medicine Residency Program

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