



June 26, 2020

STATEMENT - There's no pill to cure racism in Canada's healthcare system – only collective action will transform inequities for Indigenous people

The government of British Columbia has opened an investigation into reports that BC emergency room health professionals played 'guessing games' about the blood alcohol content of Indigenous patients. This kind of discriminatory behaviour needs to stop, right now. Then, we must figure out how to prevent this from ever happening again.

It starts by properly naming the problem, and I am encouraged that elected leaders are saying the words systemic racism out loud. We need truth spoken before reconciliation can be enacted.

Many important efforts are happening across the health system to address systemic racism. Yet overwhelming evidence shows that Indigenous people experience deep inequities in healthcare across Canada. Health authorities and professional organizations must immediately enact the TRC's call to action to put in place guidelines and training across the healthcare system to end discrimination against Indigenous people.

The work has already begun, including the signing by the BC Ministry of Health, health authorities, and doctors' and other health professionals' organizations of the B.C. *Declaration on Cultural Safety and Humility*, in recognition of the urgent need to address racism in healthcare.

Still, there needs to be transformation and change. So that when any person walks into their doctor's office or a hospital – they feel safe and respected. Everyone deserves that.

While there is no pill that takes away racism we can all recognize that we are in a moment. We have to come together to empower and listen to the people we are serving in the healthcare system, and to come forward with solutions. If we cannot do that, people will continue to be harmed or to die through discriminatory treatment. If that means calling out the oppression, then that's what needs to happen. At the same time, we must find the pathway to harmony and peace with each other.

-- Margo Greenwood, Academic Lead, National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health



Background:

Reference:

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada - Call to Action #24:

We call upon medical and nursing schools in Canada to require all students to take a course dealing with Aboriginal health issues, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, and Indigenous teachings and practices. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

Resources

www.nccih.ca/

www.fnha.ca/wellness/cultural-humility (includes definition of systemic racism)

www.indigenoushealthnh.ca/initiatives/cultural-safety

www.bcmj.org/news/commitment-cultural-safety-and-humility

The National Collaborating Centre (NCCIH) for Indigenous Health is a national Indigenous organization established in 2005 by the Government of Canada and funded through the Public Health Agency of Canada to support First Nations, Inuit, and Métis public health renewal and health equity through knowledge translation and exchange. The University of Northern British Columbia, in Prince George, BC, hosts the NCCIH.

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