

Thursday 13th September
Stream C
2.00pm – 3.00pm

Maintaining cultural connectedness for Asian inmates: A holistic approach to service delivery

Jiali Li, Counsellors and Health Promoters, Asian Family Services
Alex Wang, Counsellors and Health Promoters, Asian Family Services

Suicide in New Zealand prisons has been of concern for many years with research highlighting that prisoners have higher rates of suicide and self-harm than the general population.

Social connectedness is regarded as an important protective factor against self-harm and suicide (World Health Organisation, 2007). However, people who are vulnerable to suicide may have poor social support because of their life course, rather than being predisposed to risk because of a lack of social support (Beautrais, 2005).

Asian Family Services (AFS) has been working in a correctional facility since 2011 providing support services for Asian inmates who not only experience stress from sentencing, but also have cultural and language barriers that can lead to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. When working with them, we recognise the importance of providing holistic support so incorporate a large component of stress management and cultural connectedness in the early stages of our programme.

After integrating this into our service delivery in prisons, we saw a considerable improvement in the participants' mental health screen scores (PHQ 9 depression assessment and GAD 7 anxiety assessment). The more significant outcome was that the participants maintained the connection with AFS even after they had moved to other correctional facilities by writing to us to describe their experiences with gambling. This inspired AFS to develop a correspondence programme for inmates that do not have programmes available to support them in their journey of recovery.

Presenter biographies

Jiali is a counsellor and health promoter who has been with Asian Family Services for nine years. She is a migrant from Canton, China and has been in New Zealand for 30 years.

Alongside her counselling role, Jiali facilitates gambling harm prevention groups for inmates impacted by gambling in Mt Eden Correctional Facility.

Jiali is a member of the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) and obtained her Bachelor of Social Work from the University of Auckland. Currently she is studying towards a Master of Counselling at the University of Auckland.

Alex was born in Beijing, China and migrated to New Zealand four years ago. Formerly a police officer in Beijing for five years, he is now working for Asian Family Services as a counsellor and health promoter. Alex provides counselling services for gamblers and affected family members along with facilitating gambling harm prevention groups in Mt Eden Correctional Facility and Auckland South Correctional Facility.

Alex has completed his Master of Applied Social Work from Massey University and is a member of the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB). He is currently studying papers on alcohol and other drugs at Auckland University.

Understanding connections and the migration journey when working with South Asian International students

Shirleen Prasad, Asha Programme Lead, Asian family Services
Aayush Tripathi, Former International student

Everyone has a culture and therefore we are all subject to different values, beliefs and expectations that influence our experience.

As illustrated by Shivanath and Hiremath, “culture is a means of group survival through developing a sense of group versus the other”. So what happens when an individual leaves the collectivist means of survival and finds oneself as ‘the other’ in a new country’?

A significant number of clients coming into Asian Family Services are migrants with different cultural backgrounds.

The Asha programme is a new initiative providing counselling that is culturally and linguistically appropriate for South Asian migrants with a gambling problem, incorporating their migration journey and adjustment difficulties.

Over a six-month period, there have been common themes shared by clients in relation to their journey and their gambling behaviour. This presentation is a case study of a South Asian man who will share his story about his journey as an international student, having to deal with change as both good and bad at the same time and how it impacted his behaviour and thinking around gambling.

Presenter biography

Shirleen Prasad is the Lead for the Asha Programme at Asian Family Services. She works with South Asian clients and is fluent in Hindi and English. Shirleen has a Bachelors’ degree of Counselling and a Graduate Diploma in Arts majoring in Psychology and is a provisional member of DAPAANZ.

Disconnect, mis-connect and reconnect: Chinese migrants’ experience of recovery from gambling addiction

Wenli Zhang, PhD candidate, Asian Family Services & University of Auckland

Gambling addiction is a concern for many migrants in New Zealand. However, little is known how they cope with and overcome addiction to gambling. This presentation is a preliminary report on a qualitative doctoral study which explores Chinese migrants’ experience of recovery from a gambling addiction. The researcher applied a hermeneutic phenomenological research methodology and have conducted in-depth interviews with eight families (one gambler and one significant other member of each family). The preliminary analysis indicates that many participants have experienced a journey of disconnect from their original life cycle, a mis-connection to gambling, and finally a reconnect to a healthier life. The influential factors in moving through each stage will be explained. Suggestions on how to integrate these findings into the practice of minimising gambling harm will be offered.

Presenter biography

Wenli Zhang is a PhD (Social Work) student at the School of Counselling, Human Service & Social Work under the supervision of Professor Christa Fouché and Professor Peter Adams.

Wenli has been working as a social worker, counsellor, and researcher in New Zealand for almost two decades. Her areas of interest include new migrant settlement, domestic violence, mental health and recovery, peer support, and minimising gambling harm for gamblers, their families, their communities, and society.