



Traditional Healing Practices and Cultural Humility

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Disclosures

There are no relevant financial relationships with ACCME-defined commercial interests for anyone who was in control of the content of this activity.



Agenda



- Culturally-centered and integrated substance use treatments for American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/ANs)
- Potential benefits of AI/AN traditional healing practices
- Examples of AI/AN traditional healing practices
- Challenges for implementing AI/AN traditional healing practices



American Indians/Alaska Natives and traditional healing practices

- AI/AN traditional healing practices have been used for many years among AI/ANs in the U.S.
- AI/AN traditional healing practices continue to be used to promote AI/AN cultural identity, history, and traditions.
- AI/AN traditional healing practices are utilized clinically to address the unique health care needs and treatment requests of this population.
- Engaging in AI/AN traditional practices may help in the treatment of substance use issues among AI/ANs.

Examples of AI/AN traditional practices

- Drumming
- Dancing
- Regalia making
- Hunting
- Learning tribal language
- Attending pow-wows
- Attending ceremonies
- Sweat Lodge
- Many more depending on specific tribes

Historical Trauma and AI/AN Cultural Identity



- Many U.S. historical actions, i.e., removals and relocation acts, have resulted in a fragmented AI/AN community
- Many AI/ANs may have “lost” some of their cultural identity.
- Lost of cultural identity may contribute to increased drug and alcohol use.
- Conversely, strong cultural identification may help youth and adults to be less likely to use drugs/alcohol.
- AI/ANs who engage or re-engage with AI/AN traditional healing practices may be less likely to use alcohol and other drugs.

AI/AN and cultural identity

- Many American Indians strongly believe that their problems with alcohol stem from their sudden disconnection with traditional American Indian culture
- American Indian traditions, customs, rituals, and values may assist in discovering positive coping strategies during recovery.
- Denying AI/ANs the opportunity to rely on those strategies may contribute to ongoing drug/alcohol use.



Incorporation of traditional healing services

- Incorporating traditional aspects of healing has been recognized as being important in substance abuse recovery for AI/AN.
- Participating in traditional activities may enhance and renew AI/AN sense of personal and cultural identity.
- Studies have shown a renewed pride in AI/AN cultural heritage, feeling motivated to learn more about their cultural heritage, and coming to feel “worthy” of participating cultural events among AI/ANs in recovery.
- Opportunity to learn about healthier cultural ideals, views, and traditions which may aid in recovery.



Practice Considerations

- The demand for traditional based substance abuse treatments is high among AI/ANs.
- Traditional based treatments may help with maximizing substance abuse treatment engagement and retention.
- To date, reimbursement mechanisms for drumming and traditional-based treatments are limited due to the limited amount of research conducted demonstrating effectiveness.

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- Communication with county administrators and other billing sources needs to occur to further discuss reimbursement mechanisms.

Conclusions

- AI/AN traditional healing practices may be effective for AI/ANs with substance use disorders.
- Strategies to reimburse for AI/AN traditional healing practices are needed.
- Recognition and adherence to cultural traditions is necessary when using traditional healing practices as a treatment option for AI/ANs.
- Further research of AI/AN traditional healing practices may help to add further evidence of its effectiveness.