

Promoting Diversity in Naturopathic Medicine through Mentorship and Transformational Leadership

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INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving healthcare landscape, the importance of mentorship and transformational leadership cannot be overstated, especially within the field of naturopathic medicine. These concepts are instrumental in fostering cultural diversity, supporting underrepresented groups, and driving positive change in educational and professional environments.

THE ROLE OF MENTORSHIP

Mentorship involves a relationship wherein a more experienced mentor provides guidance, support, and knowledge to a mentee. This relationship is particularly vital in naturopathic medicine, where it can help aspiring practitioners navigate the complexities of their education and career. Effective mentorship fosters personal and professional growth, enhances confidence, and provides a sense of belonging, which is crucial for underrepresented groups.

IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Cultural diversity enriches naturopathic medicine by introducing varied perspectives and approaches, ultimately leading to better healthcare outcomes. Embracing diversity helps address health disparities and ensures that healthcare providers can offer culturally competent care. However, there is a significant lack of representation of marginalized groups in naturopathic medicine, which perpetuates these disparities.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

Historically marginalized groups, including Indigenous peoples, Asians, African Americans, and Latin communities, represent a substantial portion of the population. Despite this, they remain underrepresented in healthcare professions. Increasing diversity within naturopathic medicine is essential to reflect the demographics of the communities served and to provide equitable care.

EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE AND ITS IMPACT

The current educational system in naturopathic medicine often aligns with individualistic cultural values, which may not resonate with students from collectivist backgrounds. These students might feel alienated or unsupported, which could affect their academic performance and overall experience. To address this, educational practices must integrate cultural competence, recognize diverse cultural values, and support community-oriented values.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Critical race theory (CRT) is an analytical framework that examines the presence and impact of race and racism within societal structures, including education and health care. CRT posits that racism is not an aberration but a normalized and ingrained feature of society, influencing laws, policies, and practices. CRT allows us to identify systemic inequities by uncovering how institutional practices and policies perpetuate racial inequalities. Further, we can challenge dominant narratives by questioning and reframing those narratives that marginalize underrepresented groups. In addition, we can promote social justice, as CRT advocates for a proactive approach to eliminating racial disparities by transforming societal structures. Lastly, we can empower marginalized voices by emphasizing the importance of elevating the experiences and perspectives of underrepresented communities to inform more equitable policies and practices. Therefore, applying CRT in naturopathic medicine involves critically examining how educational and professional practices may disadvantage underrepresented groups and implement changes to promote inclusivity and equity. Transformational leadership, which emphasizes collaboration, a shared vision, and ethical behaviour, aligns well with the principles of CRT.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Transformational leadership involves inspiring and motivating others to achieve their full potential and work towards a shared vision. Key behaviours of transformational leaders include

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idealized influence, whereby a leader acts as a role model who exemplifies high ethical standards, integrity, and commitment. Inspirational motivation involves communicating a clear, compelling vision that motivates and inspires others to pursue shared goals. Next, intellectual stimulation involves encouraging innovation, creativity, and critical thinking by challenging the status quo. Lastly, individualized consideration involves providing personalized support, mentorship, and attention to the unique needs and aspirations of each person. Inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration: by embracing these behaviours, transformational leaders can create an environment that supports growth, innovation, and inclusivity within naturopathic medicine.

MODEL OF COMMUNITY CULTURAL WEALTH

The Model of Community Cultural Wealth, developed by Tara Yosso¹, provides a framework for understanding the various forms of capital that underrepresented groups possess. This model identifies six forms of capital that contribute to community cultural wealth. First, aspirational capital is the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of real and perceived barriers. Second, linguistic capital is the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style. Third, familial capital is the cultural knowledges nurtured among family that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition. Fourth, social capital represents networks of people and community resources that provide instrumental and emotional support. Fifth, navigational capital utilizes skills of maneuvering through social institutions, including educational spaces. Lastly, resistant capital involves the knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behaviours that challenge inequality. Understanding and leveraging these

forms of capital can transform how we support students from underrepresented groups in naturopathic medicine. By recognizing and valuing the cultural wealth they bring, we can create a more inclusive and equitable educational environment

CONCLUSION

Emphasizing mentorship, transformational leadership, and cultural diversity in naturopathic medicine is crucial for creating a more inclusive and supportive environment. By recognizing the unique strengths and contributions of underrepresented groups, we can improve healthcare outcomes and build a stronger, more diverse profession.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

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