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Doing it Right: Ethical Vigilance in Indigenous Research

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This presentation will discuss the ethical, moral and philosophical complexities and challenges for non-Indigenous researchers researching with Indigenous patients. This qualitative study explores whether Indigenous renal patients in the Northern Territory have their rights, as set out in the Australian Charter of Health Care Rights, recognised and realised.

Indigenous people are the most researched population groups in the world and according to Brannelly (2016), research methodologies often reaffirm colonising practices. The history of Indigenous health research has been imperialistic and there has been research conducted with minimal consultation, disrespectful experimentation and theft of traditional knowledge, which has led to suspicion and disrespect for Western researchers (Gray & Opreescu, 2016, Smith 2013).

It is important when researching with Indigenous people to be cognizant of the following questions: who owns Indigenous knowledge? what is the most appropriate way to collect and analyse Indigenous knowledge? And how should we store and share this knowledge? When making decisions about methodologies and methods, it is important to acknowledge the power play between traditional research methodological principles and the cultural orientation and values of the research participants. The following strategies were used in this research to ensure ethical practices.

The study design was firmly aligned with the National Health and Medical Research Council (2003) Guidelines for Ethical Conduct when researching with the Indigenous peoples. This incorporated reciprocity, respect, equality, responsibility, survival and protection and spirit and integrity. The study utilised community consultation and collaboration as a best practice, demonstrating the researcher's respect for Indigenous culture and values and the ethical responsibility to ensure comfort and cultural safety for the research participants. The researcher is supported and guided by an Indigenous Reference Group to ensure that this research project appropriately promotes the ethical advancement of knowledge and demonstrates respect for the diversity and integrity of Indigenous cultures.

Biography:

Mrs. Leena Kesava Panicker is a lecturer and coordinator for international students in the College of Nursing and Midwifery, Charles Darwin University (CDU), Australia. She is a final year PhD student with CDU and her thesis focuses on health rights of Australian Indigenous peoples. Her research interests include health and human rights, research ethics, researching with vulnerable groups, empowerment and chronic disease management. Leena's professional and academic career spreads over 27 years in Australia, Ireland, Middle East and India. She has extensive clinical and research expertise in renal nursing and chronic disease management.