

Providing Culturally Relevant Treatment

Source: Produced by Victoria Tilney McDonough and Brian King

Video Link: <http://www.brainline.org/content/multimedia.php?id=1426>

Caron Gan: So when you're working with people from different cultures it would be very important to slow down the process and understand what their world views might be. So the way that they view the brain injury may be very different than how people in western culture may view it.

So, for example, in western culture, we know that the brain injury is due to damage to the brain, there's been some bruising, it has caused some injury to the frontal lobes, for example, so that's a very biological scientific way of looking at it. Families from other cultures may not view it quite the same way. They may view it as due to illness or maybe due to fate or God's will and it's not uncommon for families to say to me it's as if it's... they equate it with craziness or he is mental and somehow because a brain injury is part of the brain, people often equate anything to do with the brain or any changes related to the brain as mental. So part of it is education for family is to help them understand that a brain injury is not the same as mental illness and hopefully that helps to reduce some of the stigma that families might experience around how they are viewing their family member's injury.

The other thing that's important in addition to understanding their world views about the brain injury is what are the sources of help that they think are meaningful, what do they think is going to help their family member recover or get better. So for some family members, it may not be traditional rehabilitation such as OT, PT or it may not be traditional rehabilitation such as occupational therapy or physiotherapy or speech and language pathology. For other families it may be prayer or it may be folk remedies and if these are the sources of help that would be meaningful for the family, we need to incorporate that as part of the rehabilitation plan and acknowledge that that's a form of help that will make a difference for this family.