

Indigenous populations

When working in a rural area, you will be more likely to see patients of Aboriginal and TSI background than when working in larger cities. Rural experience provides an opportunity to learn about different cultures and the resilience of Aboriginal and TSI communities, develop clinical skills specific to these populations, and overcome language barriers and low levels of literacy.

Some other useful facts include:

1. Many people of Aboriginal background are at higher risk of certain physical ailments (e.g. diabetes, malnutrition / vitamin deficiency, injury).
2. Substance abuse patterns can be different in Aboriginal communities, with toxic substances like petrol, spray-paint and methylated spirits being in greater use than narcotics.
3. Remember to take into account cultural beliefs and practices when assessing people of Aboriginal background. For example, self-inflicted scars which may be associated with cultural practices, references to spirits or other culturally recognised phenomena.
4. You will probably work together with an Aboriginal health worker or Aboriginal mental health worker. They may assist you in a number of roles, including as liaison officers, interpreters, and cultural brokers. They can provide valuable information on process and kinship networks.
5. There are high rates of co morbidity in Aboriginal populations.
6. Grief and trauma are significant problems in Aboriginal mental health, as a result of historical and ongoing cultural loss. Grief is also an ongoing issue as it is not uncommon for people of aboriginal background to have recently attended a funeral of an extended family member.
7. When treating people of Aboriginal background, you may need to involve family more in treatment than you would with other patients. People of Aboriginal background are likely to have a large extended family, with many potential carers.
8. Assess for legal or forensic issues as involvement in these systems is high in Aboriginal populations.

For more information visit: (link to be provided)