

ABSTRACT

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF NATIVE AMERICAN PREFERENCE FOR THERAPEUTIC HEALING TREATMENT IN THE MENTAL HEALTH SETTING: NATIVE VOICES ON SPIRITUAL PRACTICES AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Native Americans experience high incidence of mental health disorders such as serious depression, posttraumatic stress disorders, and suicide. Traditional Western mental health therapies have been ineffective in incorporating Native Americans' preference for holistic spiritual treatment consistent with their Native American worldview. This study investigated whether Native Americans preferred to include the Sweat Lodge Ceremony and Christian prayer as complements to Western mental health therapy. Sixty Native Americans completed a survey at a Native American powwow and a Native American institute seminar. Subjects were 34 females and 26 males, 19 to 69 years old. The survey consisted of 17 Likert scale questions and a comments section. Findings revealed that Native Americans felt the Sweat Lodge Ceremony was very important, preferred the Sweat Lodge Ceremony significantly more than Christian prayer as a complement to Western mental health therapy, preferred a traditional Native American to run the Sweat Lodge Ceremony, and traditional practitioners and spiritual ceremonies unique to a specific tribe. These findings suggest that Western mental health services need to include and understand important Native American healing practice to better address the mental health needs of this population.

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