

Inaugural Lecture of Professor Joanne R Naidoo

Stigma Syndemics & Symbolic (isms) in the context of HIV: Ways of Knowing in Health Care

Faculty of Health Sciences

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Summary

The negating effect of stigma on health outcomes has been widely established. Described as a hidden burden of disease, stigma significantly influences the inequities in health. The seminal work of Sociologist, Erving Goffman's (1963), continue to underpin our current understanding of stigma as socially influenced through the symbolic interactions of everyday experiences that influences behaviour.

Within the context of HIV, stigma remains a barrier in ending the epidemic and is associated with diminished health outcomes, health seeking patterns and poor quality of life. The significant advances in HIV treatment, has increased the life expectancy of people living with HIV, and has shifted the management of HIV as a manageable chronic illness. However, the negative stigma outcomes experienced by people living with HIV remains.

Moreover, the interactions of other syndemics (that is the co-existence of another disease/s, or social factors) further contributes to the stigma experienced by people living with HIV. This may refer to the co-existence of TB, depressive or other mental health disorder, younger woman, pregnancy, and occupations or work type industry, such as mini-bus taxi drivers, sex workers to name a few syndemics.

Central to the health are the values and attributes of caring, towards the restorative process for sustained health and improved wellbeing. To enable care, there is a need for health care professionals to know how to care. Patterns of Knowing or Ways of Knowing developed by nurse theorist Barbra Carper (1975, 1978) and extended by Chinn and Kramer (2008) has become widely applied in nursing and health professions education and training. Ways of knowing acknowledges five inter-related facets (empirical, ethical, personal, aesthetic and emancipatory) inherent in the provision of holistic care.

The lecture will reflect on the syndemics associated with HIV related stigma, and the symbolic interactions with health care; in the provision of health care and in education and training of health care professionals. This will be framed against ways of knowing, how health care professionals *know* how to care, the inherent and learnt symbolic meanings in how care is provided, and its potential to demystify and eliminate the perpetuated HIV related stigma.