



Minister's Medal Honouring Excellence in Health Quality and Safety

Individual Champion
Dr. Chandrakant Shah

During his many years of practice, Dr. Shah, Staff Physician at Anishnawbe Health Toronto (AHT), an Aboriginal Community Health Centre in Toronto, found that many of his Aboriginal patients disclosed experiences of discrimination, racism and culturally insensitive care in their interactions with health care providers. He therefore completed an environmental scan of cultural training among students enrolled in health professions courses in colleges and universities in Ontario. This study, completed in 2008, revealed that the majority of the health sciences programs training the 57,000 students in Ontario who would become front-line health care workers lacked content related to Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal cultural competence. Programs named the lack of Aboriginal faculty available to teach these courses and lack of curriculum time to be the main reasons for this gap.

In response, Dr. Shah developed the Aboriginal Cultural Safety Initiative through AHT in 2011 in order to address this gap in course curricula for these students. With financial support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, he facilitated the development of a three-hour cultural competency-training module for the health sciences students. The training draws on the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada's curriculum framework for continuing medical education and explores the impacts of colonization on social determinants of health and the health status of Aboriginal peoples, the concept of health and healing in Aboriginal communities, and gaps in mainstream health services for Aboriginal peoples. He recruited 35 volunteer Aboriginal instructors across Ontario to deliver these modules to students in colleges and universities. The unique aspect of having local Aboriginal instructors as facilitators allowed the lived experiences of these individuals to emerge, and the sharing of personal narratives increased connections between instructors and students. Responses from students on their evaluation forms have been overwhelmingly positive. More information, including promotional videos on this program can be found at: <http://www.aht.ca/aboriginal-culture-safety>.

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*The information provided above is taken directly from 2014 Minister's Medal applications –
Facts and information herein have been updated in 2015 but have not been verified for accuracy.*