Rationale of Proposed Work:
The Mental Health Commission of Canada has identified social and structural inequalities as an area of importance for addressing mental health, and is working with the Centre for the Study of Gender, Social Inequities and Mental Health (CGSM) to explore how intersectionality can inform policy development, implementation and evaluation. The proposed project involves the use of an intersectional policy methodology to explore the policy area of Self Directed Care (SDC) and develop recommendations for policy directions and future research.

Project Aims and Goals:

Aims:

- To develop a policy research strategy and recommendations for the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) and a proposal for future research to further understand SDC and the utilization of equity frameworks in mental health policy.

- To work collaboratively with the Evidence Panel to identify equity issues as they relate to the area of SDC in mental health.

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- To develop policy recommendations for the MHCC and a proposal for future research to further understand SDC and the utilization of equity frameworks in mental health policy.

The overall goals of the project are:

- To convene an Evidence Panel and provide equity training.
- To work collaboratively with the Evidence Panel to examine evidence as it relates to SDC in mental health.
- To work collaboratively with the Evidence Panel to identify equity issues as they relate to the area of SDC in mental health.
- To develop policy recommendations for the MHCC and a proposal for future research to further understand SDC and the utilization of equity frameworks in mental health policy.

What is Self-Directed Care?

- Participants develop person-centred service plans.
- Participants create individual budgets allocating dollar amounts to achieve their plan’s goals.
- Staff (also known as Brokers) are available to help clients choose and purchase services and goods named in their budgets.
- Fiscal intermediary provides financial management services such as provider billing and payroll. 

Methods:

Intersectionality offers an alternative to an “additive approach” to policy making. The goal of an intersectional analysis is to identify and address “the way specific acts and policies address the inequalities experienced by various social groups” (1). Taking into account that social identities such as race, class, gender, ability, geography and age interact to form unique meanings and complex experiences within and between groups in society. The complexity and relative ‘newness’ of an intersectionality approach remains a challenge for policy makers. One promising approach for applying an intersectionality framework to public policy is the Multi-Strand Approach (2). The Multi-Strand Approach begins with the examination of a policy field and then proceeds through various stages ending with monitoring and evaluation. This promising approach was developed in the UK context, where emerging legislation is prompting progressive work to develop policy models that are able to address multiple grounds of inequality. The proposed work to be undertaken by the Mental Health Reform and Policy Theme group involves the development of a research project applying the Multi-Strand Approach to a priority area identified in collaboration with the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

Implications:

The proposed work aims to:
- Foster collaborative partnerships among interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral teams of researchers and research users (i.e., scholars, policy makers, providers, and people with direct experience of mental illness and substance use problems).
- Explore the use of an intersectionality framework in the development and implementation of mental health policy as a methodology for reducing the impact of social inequities on mental health;
- Understand and respond to the social, political, and institutional processes through which mental health and substance use policies and practices are developed, and how social and mental health inequities are sustained or attenuated for different populations.

References:


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