3rd World Congress on

Nursing Education, Practice & Research

May 16-17, 2018 | Montreal, Canada

Empowering UK health care professionals to overcome cultural barriers faced whilst managing and safeguarding the complexities of female genital mutilation

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Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises of all procedures involving the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non- medical reasons (WHO, 2008). FGM is practiced in over 29 different African countries, it is a violation of human rights and a form of child abuse. Furthermore, FGM has no health benefits. Approximately, 170,000 women and girls have undergone FGM in the UK (ITV News, 2014) and the UK government is committed to tackling gender-based violence. Of late, FGM has become a key focus of media attention in the UK because of no convictions. This is despite FGM disclosure being a mandatory duty under the Serious Crime Act (SCA) 2015 which compels all health and social care professional to report FGM to the police in under 18-year old. Current data implies that FGM reporting still remains significantly low in the UK. Reports criticize the inadequate provision of training to professionals which suggest that FGM training lacks cultural sensitivity, overcoming fears of racism, breaching confidentiality and overcoming cultural barriers. Furthermore, there are concerns about how safeguarding, risk assessment and partnership working are being accomplished in the process of managing FGM? Through the use of a 10Kv safeguarding workshop, it was confirmed that safeguarding and risk assessment pose vast challenges and difficulties. This presentation addresses the problematic issues faced by health and social care professionals faced in overcoming major barriers to managing the safeguarding complexities from a multi-agency partnership approach. Moreover, the provision of a multi-agency FGM Hydra brings with it a solution to empower professionals and overcome the highlighted challenges in practice.