

Wellness Centre for Tamil Speaking Seniors

Vasantham was developed as an outcome of the Ethnoracial Seniors Project, which addressed barriers to access to mental health care, working with the two communities identified in the preliminary study. The project was guided by a Community Work Group from the two communities, composed of Seniors, family members and community service workers, and derived information from a series of focus groups in each community, with groups of seniors, family members, community service workers and Family Physicians. Findings were presented at a Consensus Conference, where Groups including policy makers, leaders from health, mental health and community Agencies and psychiatrists discussed implementation. Similarly, at a series of Community conferences the findings were discussed by seniors, family members and community service workers after presentation of findings in drama form. The Toronto Study is published in this month's Canadian journal of Psychiatry.

Vasantham is a Wellness Centre to serve Tamil speaking Seniors and their families, with a single entry, and focusing on health promotion and illness prevention, in addition to coordinating mental health related services. Services will be culturally responsive and linguistically accessible, informed by ongoing community consultations and shaped in partnership with local agencies and organisations. Decreased isolation and feelings of alienation, and establishment of support, enable the Seniors to return to an active role in the community. By participation in the programs and services arranged through the Centre, Tamil Seniors will enhance self-esteem and overall well-being and develop new skills through educational programs. Families also benefit through enhanced intergenerational understanding and reduced stress on family members. Vasantham endeavours to empower Tamil Seniors and their families to maintain and promote Health and Well-being through Education, Advocacy and provision of programs and services that are racially sensitive, culturally appropriate and linguistically accessible.

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