



Re: Treatment of Indigenous Woman by Nurses in Quebec

On September 26th, 2020 Joyce Echaquan, an Atikamekw woman, entered a hospital in Joliette, Quebec for stomach pains. Ms. Echaquan had a pre-existing heart condition and was given morphine despite her reservations about a potential adverse reaction. On September 28th, Ms. Echaquan livestreamed many negative interactions she experienced via Facebook, including many racist remarks from the nurse and other health care workers. Ms. Echaquan died shortly after filming these interactions.

Every day in Canada Indigenous people experience the lasting impacts of systemic racism in health care. Many people are physically harmed by these behaviours and others are left feeling distrustful of the health care system.ⁱ Racism is a key social determinant of health and contributes to social inequities causing Indigenous people such as Joyce Echaquan to suffer disproportionatelyⁱⁱ.

It is the position of NNPBC that the nurse involved in the racism inflicted on Joyce Echaquan violated nursing ethics and the principles and standards of our practice. The nurse in question failed to fulfill their foundational responsibility to practice nursing ethically and did not provide safe or competent care. Furthermore, these actions violated the public trust by neglecting the most fundamental duty- to provide safe care. NNPBC strongly condemns the behaviour of this nurse and supports work currently underway to eradicate the influence of systemic racism on patients who rely on nurses to uphold our primary imperative to care. NNPBC believes that nursing is well placed to call out systemic racism across the health care landscape and asserts that any form of racism is fundamentally antithetical to nursing core values and has no place in practice.

Nurses interact with people in all sectors, across all domains of practice from first to last breath. As professionals, nurses have an opportunity to learn from the experiences of Indigenous people in health care. It is our responsibility to work to eradicate the conditions that perpetuate systemic racism and in particular learn from this incident as an example of how violating nursing ethics can lead to dire consequences.

Ms. Echaquan's story is not an isolated incident. As nurses and leaders, let us work together to make health care a safe place for all. Cultural competency and humility training for all health professionals is an important first step. As the professional association, NNPBC will work collaboratively with our nursing colleagues, locally and nationally, to address systemic racism.

ⁱ National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. [Health Inequities and Social Determinants of Aboriginal Peoples' Health](#).

ⁱⁱ National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. [An Overview of Aboriginal Health in Canada](#).