

Commitment to change: Motivational Interviewing Training in Chicago

A technique that was originally developed to help people make changes to their alcohol consumption and substance use, Motivational Interviewing (MI) more recently has been effectively used to assist people to change a broad range of health behaviours, both reducing and increasing health behaviours.

Psychology Consultants' director Dr Stan Steindl, who used MI during his PhD research to reduce alcohol consumption in Vietnam veterans, travelled to Chicago USA in April to become one of a handful of professionals specifically trained by MI co-founder Professor Bill Miller. "The use of MI with a range of health behaviours has now been examined, with studies investigating alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, diet, exercise, risky sexual behaviours, showing excellent results," Stan said. With a broad evidence base and a well-defined style for interacting with clients, MI is applicable in many clinical, counselling and health settings.

MI WORKSHOPS

Since returning from Chicago, Stan has run a number of MI training workshops for health-related staff such as other psychologists, counsellors, nurses, and rehabilitation staff for The Cancer Council Queensland, St Andrews and Gold Coast Hospital's Cardiac Rehab Units, and UQ's Dental School. "The MI workshop introduces motivational interviewing. Participants develop an understanding of the fundamental spirit and principles of MI and they develop their use of empathic counselling skills, which is central to using the MI technique. They observe, experience and practice MI and how it can be used to roll with resistance and encourage change and commitment talk," Stan said.

Some organisations are continuing their training with supervision where participants submit video-taped examples of themselves conducting a motivational interview. These are then coded for MI adherence and feedback is provided.