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**Type of Presentation:** Workshop

**Empowering family by strengthening the relationship with their loved one experiencing psychosis**

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**Learning Goal:**

The audience will hear about a New Zealand culturally responsive family education programme developed by family members in conjunction with lived experience, cultural and clinical experts. Drawing upon lived experience literature from New Zealand and overseas, the programme empowers family with skills and knowledge to promote recovery and wellbeing.

**Abstract Text:**

Family Psycho-education is based on the diathesis-stress theory that people with ongoing psychosis have an underlying biological vulnerability to developing symptoms which are worsened by excessive environmental stress. In this approach families are educated about the mental illness and taught communication skills by mental health experts to decrease stressful communication and reduce the likelihood of relapse.

These programmes tend to be developed by clinical experts with minimal input from the person who experiences psychosis. Perhaps as a result the focus is fairly bio-medical emphasising the caregiver role of family ie monitoring medication, observing early warning signs and valued as 'the eyes and ears of the service'. Most people with experience of mental distress have stated they want their family to be their family not their caregiver.

Many psycho-education programmes have generated data to indicate they reduce hospital admissions, however there are questions as to whether or not they promote recovery and positive family (whānau) relationships.

In New Zealand (Aotearoa) there is an emerging knowledge base from whānau members who have started to reflect on and write about learnings from their own experience. They are keen to see skill based whānau education provided that strengthens their relationship and supports their loved one's autonomy, rather than fostering alienation and distance .

One of these whānau members is the presenter who has been privileged to lead the development of a New Zealand whānau education programme around psychosis that aligns with recovery and cultural approaches, a strengths focus and holistic frameworks of health. Co-facilitated by a family member and a clinician, the 6 week group has allowed whānau to know what they can do to support recovery and wellbeing for their loved one and themselves. The presentation will focus on course development, content, evaluation and the case for change in family education approaches.

**ON THE HEALING POWER  
OF HUMAN RECONNECTION**