



MAULISHA CHAWLA:

Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome. I'm Maulisha Chawla, and part of the equity, diversity and inclusion team at the School of Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences Student Society. We've been working with the science, equity, diversity and inclusion team at the UNSW to bring today's seminar on Neurodiversity Movement in Science. I would like to start our discussion today by acknowledging the Darug people, who are the Traditional Custodians of the land from which I'm speaking today. And I would also like to pay my respects to the Elders past and present and to extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are here with us this afternoon. If you would like to, I would encourage you to recognise which land you are joining from in the chat. Today's session will be recorded, so if you need to leave early or miss any part, you can encourage active audience participation, as this is a discussion, more than a presentation. Please use the live Q& chat function for any questions you may have and we will address as many as possible. OK, so I'm very pleased to be hosting today's discussion topic on neurodiversity, which is an important concept in terms of equity, diversity and inclusion. To begin our session today, I'd like to introduce you to our panellists. We'll start off with Isabelle Vertucci, who is an Equity Program Coordinator. Isabelle.

ISABELLE VERTUCCI:

and we're majoring in Neuroscience and Microbiology. I'm a Neurodiversity student and a proud member of the LGBTQ community. I was diagnosed almost four years ago, well just a little bit of four years ago, with ADHD and all the other subset disorders that are associated with it, like dyslexia, anxiety and mild depression. I've also been diagnosed with binge-eating disorder and dissociation disorder stems from childhood trauma. I struggle with being organised and get overwhelmed really

different interpretation of what it includes. So, we might start off with Dr Arnold. Sam, what is your understanding of the term neurodiversity and how might you define it?

SAMUEL:

Thank you. So, I think in understanding neurodiversity, I think of biodiversity and its link to that term, and we all know how important biodiversity is. And so neurological diversity would also appear to be very important, and that helps us to focus on difference as opposed to deficit that, you know, there's no one single way for a human brain to be wide, that is the wide way. And that generally difference is a good thing. It's not good if everything, when everyone is the same. It's a benefit to all of us, to the human project, if we do a better integrating, accommodating and supporting neurodivergent people. That's what I think.

MAULISHA:

Yes, thank you for that definition. Isabelle, what's your viewpoint and how would you define neurodiversity?

ISABELLE:

Thank you. I was thinking about this question and I was thinking about it more potentially from a bit of an advocacy and disability perspective. And I was looking at two models of thinking, and I know that these are brought up a little bit in the articles as well. But we have been mostly brought up and a lot of conversations still to this day is around thinking about the medical model of disability. So, in this model, we look at an individual and we look at what makes them abnormal. We look at what makes them dysfunctional and especially in the neurodiverse space. We've looked at the person and seen what was wrong. And generally, this is a model where we look at somebody as well and think about how they need to be fixed or cured in order to participate in society. But now, what we're really trying to push for and what we're trying to get people to think about a little bit more is the social model of disability. So, the social model of disability looks at disability being a social construct.

potentially also examples of projects where neurodiverse individuals have collaborated on research, design and the advantage of this?

IRYNA:

Sure. So, I'm working on understanding the genetic basis of autism, particularly from a molecular genetics standpoint. And as The Lancet article mentioned, autism is a very heterogeneous condition in that a lot of people who have the same clinical manifestations, in fact, have very different genetic



MAULISHA:

Absolutely. And just about speaking on the importance of the experiences of individuals who identify as neurodiverse, I think both articles indicate that environment structured based in accordance with neurotypical perspectives can be limiting for neurodiverse people. So maybe, Aaron, could you reflect on the experience of neurodivergent people in higher education and their experiences?

AARON:

Well, reflecting my own personal experience of being at a neurodiversity at UNSW, which I would definitely say is probably a neurotypical environment, it's been quite challenging. As navigating my



MAULISHA:

Yes. Thank you so much for sharing your experience. I really wanted to hear from you and how diverse the experience can be. The Lancet article states that individuals with similar clinical presentation can have very different neurocognitive and genetic profiles. Arina maybe this question is to you. What does this mean in terms of the significance of the clinical model of neurodiversity? I know you indicated a little bit about it in your first question, but if you have something on it?

IRYNA:

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problematic was the post-diagnosis support that there was very little for autistic adults once they received the diagnosis, and almost to the point of why do I go to all this effort to get a diagnosis



don't want us to feel like if we have a disability, we have to go into the disability program. So something I'm trying to do with my team is to work on every different kind of peer support program around the university and see how we can make them more inclusive as well. And likewise, in my disability champion work, we're looking at the whole university. We're doing a bit of an audit at the moment and seeing where people are being left out, where there are barriers and how we can break them down, and where we can make spaces more inclusive. But yeah, that's just a little bit of what's going on. And I hope that actually next year as well, we're going to have a little bit more to promote as well while we continue to grow and create more community spaces. And absolutely the most important thing as well in all of this work is that everything is done in collaboration with students, students as partners, students, voices at the forefront of everything that we're creating. So it's that real nothing without... nothing about us, without us, and I really wanna make sure that that is at the heart of everything we do. Thank you. Thank you for that run down, Isabelle. And just on promoting a great deal of discussion, I can see that a lot of people have raised some questions in the chat, so maybe we'll go through some of them and address them as well. So just having a look right now. There's a question from a panellist, Josie B. I understand she might be also involved in Diversified. That said, as someone who has ADHD, anxiety, severe TBI depression, I completely understand the burnout so much closer. But I wonder how much of this is environmental. And so maybe Sam, if you want to address that question?

SAMUEL:

So I can only speak to the autistic burnt-out research that we did and which suggests that the environment plays a large factor in the stresses leading to the autistic burnout from what our participants and were telling us. And I think in other areas that will probably apply. Also, the burnout construct itself is a bit separate to autistic burnout, that there is a burnout construct that's a bit contested around what's burnout, what's depression, what's the separation between them? Burnout historically has been linked more so to employment, but there's this, then you're seeing it applied in other areas like autism, of course then. But,, students and other people who aren't necessarily employed or carers getting burnout. So I think it's an area that's a bit contested and controversial at times. But I think you have the autistic burnouts going back to the question. Definitely, the environment and accommodating aspects of the environment that the person has to navigate daily, the toll and the ongoing stress and fatigue that's leading to the more acute intense debilitating burnout states.

MAULISHA:

Absolutely. Just on that, as well as some people asking, is there a way for them to take part in research such as yours?

SAMUEL:

Unfortunately, at this point, all the studies are not recruiting at this point for002 Tc 0 Twe a-19h)9 Tc 0.003 (g)56)TJgr

things come out is very difficult to recruit. So I encourage people when you see recruitment opportunities come up to take them up then.

MAULISHA:

That's a great point, you bring through. A lot of folks here are researchers or students who are in science or researching and part of research. So it's a really good point you bring this and moving, and the next question is probably to Isabelle or maybe Aaron as well. How can service delivery for people who identify as neurodiverse be improved and adapted to meet varying individual needs? So maybe Aaron.

AARON:

I guess through this Diversified project, students are going to be able to bring their personal problems into this project and then find solutions on bringing forward from this, but also like how to implement these solutions within a university environment. So I think getting on board for this project would be one thing, but also like I think that like this might have something to do with ELS or something like that, but equitable learning services, but potentially like a more, (SIGHS) what's the right word?

More suited kind of like learning plan for students, more personalised, I think, would be a better way to go through this, I think as well. Yeah, I think, yeah, yeah.

MAULISHA:

Thank you for that. Isabelle, do you have anything to add to that?

ISABELLE:

Sure, I absolutely agree with you, Aaron. It's all about personalisation. And the only way that we can do that is to mask the q(n)-0.8h Aha.2 (t)4(i)-k.5ea tyo)-3.63.92 ( A)-1(n)-hk athay thatn6 q(n)-0.8)n -12 Td(t)-5 that2

IRYNA:

So I think Sam could answer that question, so probably he's more

