

## A BRIEF LOOK AT - CULTURAL DIVERSITY

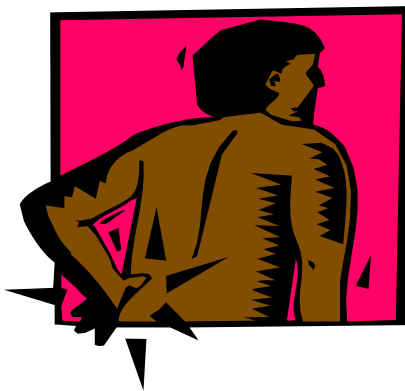


In order to provide effective care to people from other countries and, at times, people who are from various parts of the United States, it is important to have a basic understanding of cultural diversity and to develop baseline cultural competencies.

What is culture? One definition includes those beliefs, values, and practices shared by a group. The group may be ethnic, regional, religious, or based on some other identifying characteristic such as age. An individual from another culture may have different beliefs from yours or those that are considered “normal” for a particular geographic area. The beliefs may impact communication, interaction with others, nutritional preferences, and views about illness and health care.



How one communicates example, influences how some cultures, it is not others, the expression of expression may be means. Providing his/her own language ease and may foster material more effectively.

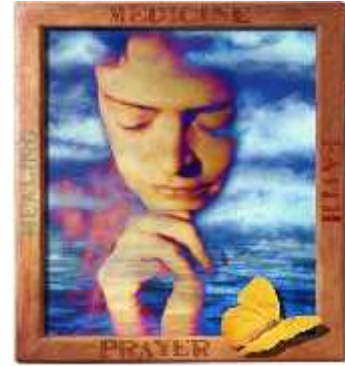


and views illness or injury, for s/he expresses pain, if at all. In accepted to express pain. In pain might be minimized. The through verbal or non-verbal information to the person in may help him/her feel more at his/her understanding the

Other factors the health care professional should consider include:

- ★ Does the patient see the illness or injury as having a supernatural cause such as being “God’s will” or a punishment for sins?
- ★ Does the patient think the only cure is a traditional herb remedy or special diet?
- ★ Does the patient believe his/her family should be allowed to visit or be present at any time?
- ★ Does the patient believe his/her family should be involved in the care?

- ★ Does the patient believe the room should be arranged a certain way to enhance his/her prayer life?
- ★ Does his/her religion allow all forms of medical intervention?
- ★ Does his/her religious beliefs allow the foods the patient may need to promote healing?
- ★ Does the patient's beliefs impact whether or not s/he signs Advance Directives or what end-of-life care is allowed?
- ★ Does the patient's cultural beliefs encourage touching, even between spouses?



You don't need to be an expert in every culture there is, but you should develop a baseline understanding for those cultures from which your patients may come and those beliefs they may practice. Your patients and their families will sense your respect for their culture. This will enhance their trust in you. It may promote compliance with care and lead to improved health. Your awareness of their culture will help patients feel better about the care being provided. Internet sources that are helpful in learning about other cultures include:

<http://www.omhrc.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=11> ;  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural\\_diversity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_diversity) ;  
<http://www.culturediversity.org/>, the site for transcultural nursing;  
 and a power point presentation for further study found at  
[hr.healthcare.ucla.edu/Download/Cultural Diversity and Health Care.ppt](http://hr.healthcare.ucla.edu/Download/Cultural_Diversity_and_Health_Care.ppt).

Although not often thought of as a “cultural diversity,” age differences play an important part in the interactions between a patient and the caregiver. A younger person may not accept his/her diagnosis as readily as an older person who might see it as “just part of growing older.” Teaching methods need to be altered based on the patient's age. An older person might respond more readily to rote; whereas a younger person will accept emails and text messages as teaching tools. And, keeping in mind “political correctness,” an older man probably means nothing negative by calling the nurse “honey” or “sweetheart,” but a younger nurse might see that as harassment.



Some of the general ways you can help your patients from other cultures include:

- ★ Ask your patient how s/he wants to be addressed.
- ★ Ask your patient if you may touch him/her.
- ★ Ask your patient if s/he wants the family present during care or at the time of death.
- ★ Ask how others in the patient's community can provide support.
- ★ Be patient and give the patient time to talk about his/her care or upcoming procedures.
- ★ Be aware that the patient may avoid eye contact or maintain a distance from you. It does not mean s/he is not responding or is not friendly.
- ★ Use an interpreter trained in medical terminology. It's preferable to using family members who may not understand fully or may not interpret exactly due to their own cultural beliefs.



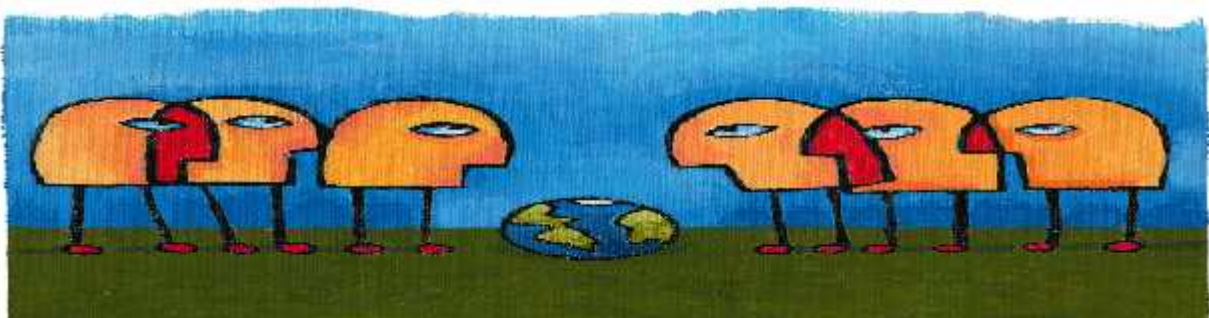
If your services are being provided to people from a specific culture on a regular basis, then learn more about that culture. A web search will reveal many sources of information about the culture. Additionally, the public library and/or library at the local high school or college may have materials that will help. Attend events such as fairs and festivals held by a cultural group.



Overall, however, remember that your patient still maintains commonalities with patients from all cultures that impact health and health care. Don't lose sight of these, which include the disease process and how age influences it.

Treating each patient as an individual and respecting his/her cultural beliefs and practices will build trust and promote effective response to the care you provide.

A resource you may want to obtain is Culture and Clinical Care found at <http://nurseweb.ucsf.edu/www/book4.htm>.



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CULTURAL DIVERSITY**



**QUIZ**

1. Culture includes beliefs and values shared by a group.  
 True  
 False
2. A person's cultural beliefs may influence what foods are eaten.  
 True  
 False
3. People from all cultures express pain the same way.  
 True  
 False
4. Everyone likes to have his/her family present during illness.  
 True  
 False
5. Patients should not be allowed to pray because taking medicine is the only way to be cured.  
 True  
 False
6. Respecting a patient's culture may lead to increased mutual trust.  
 True  
 False
7. Someone's age is not a factor in providing care because it is not a cultural consideration.  
 True  
 False
8. "Mama" is the correct way to address an elderly female patient.  
 True  
 False
9. If a patient doesn't look at you, it means s/he is lying.  
 True  
 False
10. There are commonalities within all cultures that impact health care, such as the disease process.  
 True  
 False

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Signature

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Date

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### ANSWER KEY

1. TRUE
2. TRUE
3. FALSE
4. FALSE
5. FALSE
6. TRUE
7. FALSE
8. FALSE
9. FALSE
10. TRUE