Cultural Diversity and Caring For Patients From the Middle East

Presented to: PCQN Conference Call
By: Mona El-Kurd LCSW, ACHP-SW
Hoag CARES Team
September 10, 2013
What Is Your Cultural Identity?

- American
- Irish
- Italian-American
- African-American
- Social Worker
- Nurse
- Mom
- Artist
What is Cultural Diversity?

• We All Have It!
• Obvious Manifestations:
  • Religion
  • Ethnicity (Race?)
  • National Origin (Language)
  • Gender
Cultural Diversity

• Less Obvious Manifestations:
  • Age
  • Education
  • Educational Status
  • Mobility (including handicaps)
What Is Culture?

• The sum total of the way of living; includes values, beliefs, standards, language, thinking patterns, behavioral norms, communications styles, etc.

• Guides decisions and actions of a group through time.
The Culture of Western Medicine

- Meliorism-make it better.
- Dominance over nature-take control.
- Activism-do something.
- Timeliness-sooner than later.
- Therapeutic aggressiveness-stronger=better.
- Future orientation-plan, newer=better.
- Standardization-treat similar.
Ours Versus Others

“Ours”
• Make It Better
• Control Over Nature
• Do Something
• Intervene Now
• Strong Measures
• Plan Ahead-Recent is Best
• Standardize - Treat Everyone the Same

“Others”
• Accept with Grace
• Balance/Harmony with Nature
• Wait and See
• Cautious Deliberation
• Gentle Approach
• Take Life As It Comes – “Time Honored”
• Individualize - Recognize Differences
Definition of Cultural Competence

• A set of congruent behaviors, practices, attitudes and polices that come together in a system of agency or among professionals.

• Enabling effective work to be done in cross-cultural situations.
What Do The Following People Have in Common?

• Helen Thomas-Dean of White House Press
• Donna Shalahla-Secretary of Health and Human Services
• John Sununu-Chief of Staff for George Bush
• Darrell Issa-California Congressman
What Do The Following People Have In Common?

• Dr. Mehmet Oz
• Dave Chappelle-comedian
• Akon-Rapper
• Iman-model married to David Bowie
Where Is The Middle East?
Middle East (Western Asia and North Africa)

• Egypt
• Iran
• Iraq
• Israel
• Jordan
• Lebanon
• Kuwait
Middle East (cont’)

- Saudi Arabia
- Syria
- Bahrain, Cyprus, Oman, Gaza Strip/Palestine, Qatar, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.
- Non Arab Countries-Cypress, Israel, Turkey and Iran.
Iran

• Iranian Revolution 1979.
• Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi overthrown by Ayatollah Khomeini.
• Iranian Monarchy replaced by an Islamic Republic
• Since 1979, 2-3 million Iranians have left the country. One million immigrated to the US, with an estimated $600,000 in Southern California.
• It is the wealthiest and most educated that left Iran.
The Importance of Family

• Humans develop sense of identity and self-esteem within a particular cultural context or group.
• The need to be affiliated with other persons is a universal human need and is VERY strong for Middle Easterners.
• During illness or crisis, Middle Eastern rely heavily on their “in-group” instead of trying to cope more individually as many Americans would.
How This Impacts Care

• Patient brings 1 or 2 additional people to visit who listen carefully for patient and may answer for patient.
• People close to patient consider it a duty to be there.
• This closeness may be accompanied with doubt towards those outside the intimate circle.
How This Impacts Care Cont’d

• Therefore, family members see it as their duty to ensure patient gets best possible care.
• Persistent and demanding behavior is actually the family’s indulgence of patient and is intended to show their caring—it interferes with professional care.
• Patient may never be left alone by family or friends.
Guidelines for Dealing With Middle Eastern Families

• Does not apply to every individual. Ask questions to understand personal beliefs and behaviors.
• Speak first to family spokesman.
• Person with most authority is usually the oldest and most educated.
• Same sex caregivers may be preferred.
• Women may defer to husband’s for their own care and the care of their children.
Guidelines (cont’d)

• Personal problems are usually taken care of within the family—probably not receptive to counseling.
• Loud and expressive emotions are accepted, especially during child birth, after death, or coping with pain.
• Tragedy or poor prognosis is usually revealed in stages.
• Bad news is not often given to the patient directly.
Repetition

• You may see a pattern of **Repetition** which can be interpreted as condescending.

• It’s a style of communicating which does not necessarily indicate they think you have not heard.

• Repetition recognizes the significance of the matter at hand.
High Context Communicators

• Given the intensity and frequency of their relationships, Middle Easterners are highly contextual communicators.
• Middle Easterner needs to know more about the other person than an American for a relationship to develop.
• American culture is low on context-emphasis is on the verbal message.
Time Control

- Punctuality is less important to a Middle Easterner and may be late for an appointment or not come at all if a relationship issue arises.
- Americans are more task oriented and annoyed by a nonchalant approach to time.
- While a ME may be offended by the Americans attention to getting things done rather than taking the time to establish a relationship.
Personal Space/Personal Privacy

- Conversational distance between Middle Easterners is twice as close as Americans are used to. Touch is more frequent.
- Middle Easterners touch more frequently.
- People from the Middle East tend to resist disclosing detailed information to strangers, including health care professionals until trust is established.
Cultural Views of Illness and Dying

• MD is not likely to be questioned.
• Some believe in the “evil eye”.
• Preventive Medicine not practiced as commonly in ME.
• Medication is heavily used and patients may expect a Rx.
• Hospitals are considered a place of misfortune where people go and then die.
Cultural Views Cont’d

• Family members do not plan for death.
• Grief is not permitted in the presence of the dying person.
• Once death has occurred, mourning may be loud and obvious.
Trust

• Once trust is established, Middle Easterners are typically cooperative and willing to comply with MD recommendations and treatment plan.
What is Islam?

Meaning of Islam:

Peace and Submission to the Will of God

5 Pillars of Islam

1. Faith in One God
2. Prayer 5X a Day
3. Fasting
4. Pilgrimage to Mecca
5. Zakat
End of Life Care

• Active euthanasia and assisted suicide are forbidden.

• Sanctions use of life support as long as there is some hope of revival, but once death is inevitable, family should accept God’s will and not keep organs functioning artificially.
Islamic Practices Related to Terminal Illnesses

• Some Muslims will not feel comfortable with an RN or MD of the opposite gender.
• Some Muslims only eat “halal” meat.
• Pork is prohibited.
• Alcohol is prohibited.
• Ramadan - 30 days of fasting from sunrise to sunset. People who are ill, elderly, pregnant, nursing are excused.
• Prayer 5X a Day - if devout, may continue. Bed-bound patients need to be positioned towards Mecca.
Bereavement

- Initial bereavement lasts 3 days, where prayers are recited almost continuously.
- During bereavement, most wear plain clothes, with no make-up or jewelry.
- Friends encouraged to bring food so family does not have to worry about cooking.
- Extended family and provides a great deal of support.
- Spiritual explanation for death, especially a child.
- Faith encourages sharing of grief and provides means for resolving it.
Tools in Dealing with Middle Eastern Patients and Families

• Ask Questions to understand personal beliefs and behaviors.
• “In-Group”-Make statements that show an appreciation of the culture, “Tell me about your culture, I love learning about other cultures”.
• “Duty”-Validate family’s role as caregiver.
• “Mrs. Ali is so blessed to have you caring/advocating for her”.
• “Family”-”You are such a loving family”.
Tools (cont’d)

• “Relationship Building”—show that you remember names and other aspects of the family. Tell them something about yourself that they can identify with, “I met you son yesterday, what a caring man”. “I have a teenager as well”. “I love chocolate too”.

• Consistency with Nursing Care.

• Remember the cultural guidelines regarding repetition, space, time etc and don’t take personally.
References

• Juliene G. Lipson, RN, Ph.D., & AFAF I. Meleis, RN, Ph.D. The Western Journal of Medicine. *Issues in Health Care of Middle Eastern Patients*

• Hr.healthcare.ucla.edu/..../CulturalDiversityandHealth