

Cultural Sensitivity in Healthcare Communication

CHS 446

**Communication Skills for the
Healthcare Professional**

Mohammed S. Alnaif, Ph.D.

alnaif@ksu.edu.sa

Cultural Sensitivity in Healthcare Communication

What is Culture?

Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another.

Geert H. Hofstede

Cultural Sensitivity in Healthcare Communication

What is culture?

- Definition: the way people understand their world and make sense of it, a shared system of meanings.
- Culture is learned and imprinted. Cultural programming deals with both values and practices.
- There are different layers of cultural programming: national culture, professional culture, corporate culture.

Cultural Sensitivity in Healthcare Communication

Principles of Cultural Identity

- ❖ Everyone is influenced by cultural programming which influences our behavior, and what, when, how and to whom we communicate.
- ❖ When we recognize that we have our own cultural identity, we have the ability to learn more about the communication with others.

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Culture

- **Identifiable integrated pattern of human behavior that includes customs, beliefs, values, behaviors, and communications**
- **Can be observed in racial, ethnic, religious and social groups**
- **Can be reflective of age, gender, ethnic and social group differences**
- **Everyone has a cultural identity, usually several!**

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Cultural Blindness

- **Blind to their own cultural influences and do not perceive the influences of culture in others' responses.**
- **Profess that all people are the same and culture or ethnicity make no difference**
- **What would work for one will work for everyone!**

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Cultural Competence

- **Personal qualities that reflect a capacity to respond flexibly to a range of possible solutions (openness and non-judgmental attitudes)**
- **Acceptance of ethnic differences between people**
- **A willingness to work with patients of different ethnic minority groups**

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Cultural Competence

- Articulation and clarification of **personal values**, **stereotypes**, and **biases** about their own and others' ethnicity and social class and ways in which these may accommodate or conflict with the needs of ethnic minority patients.
- Knowledge of the culture: history, traditions, values, family systems, artistic expressions, etc. of patients

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Cultural Competence

- Knowledge of the role of language, speech patterns, and communication styles in ethnicity in ethnically distinct communities
- Abilities to communicate accurate information on behalf of ethnic minority patients and their communities
- Abilities to openly discuss racial and ethnic differences and issues and to respond to culturally based cues

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Cultural Competence

- Techniques of interviewing that reflect an understanding of the role of language in the patient's culture
- **Explicit, direct communication. Emphasis on content of message**
- **Verbal Quality should be Pleasant, interested, appropriate tone**

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Cultural Competence

- **It's inappropriate to express concern when there is no reason for concern**

Verbal Messages

- **Wording must be in terms that the pt. can understand & consider the pt.'s own words and experiences**

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Cultural Competence

Eye Contact

Engaged, not staring or glaring

Postural Position

Facing the patient, open postures, flexible movements

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Cultural Competence

Trust, Respect, and Genuineness

- **All patient-provider encounters, if they are to be therapeutic, must be based upon respect and genuineness.**
- **Respect means acknowledging the value of patients**
- **Accepting their individuality as well as their unique needs and rights.**

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Cultural Competence

Trust, Respect, and Genuineness

- Genuineness refers to a provider's ability to be open and honest with the patient.
- Providers who are genuine are congruent in the communications
- Verbal statements are congruent with verbal and nonverbal communications

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Cultural Competence

Trust, Respect, and Genuineness

- Often achieved by self disclosure, but only if used carefully
- Some disclosures can create the opposite effect and create distance

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Cultural Competence

- Does the patient trust you?
- If you are perceptive as a listener and careful as an observer, noticing small details, you will have a glimpse into the life of the patient.
- Did you take the time to determine the patient's needs?

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Cultural Competence

- **Listen to the patient's feelings, language, and values;**
- **Communicate in layman's terms;**
- **Help the patient. understand**
- **Showing empathy and establishing a partnership with the pt.**

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Cultural Competence

- **Considering the patient's unique views on health and disease;**
- **Demonstrating respect for the patient's knowledge, values, and feelings;**
- **Acknowledging in a respectful way differences in values or points of view.**

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Cultural Competence

- **Supporting the patient's teaching and learning;**
- **Facilitating the patient's problem solving;**
- **Acknowledging patient. difficulties; providing different teaching styles.**
- **Listening to the other person with undivided attention**
- **Using verbal and nonverbal expressions when listening**

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