

Cultural Sensitivity in Treatment



SITUATION: Patients' sociocultural backgrounds can have an impact on how health-related decisions are made and on health outcomes. [1] A patient's personal beliefs, culture and values can shape their understanding of health, willingness to seek care and types of treatments they will consider. When patients are involved in their care, they are more likely to buy in and adhere to treatment plan



BACKGROUND: The U.S. Office of Minority Health has set national standards for culturally and linguistically appropriate health care services. The Principal Standard (No. 1) states that health care must "provide effective, equitable, understandable and respectful quality care and services that are responsive to diverse cultural health beliefs and practices, preferred languages, health literacy and other communication needs." [2] In a 12-month study published in 2019 in the National Health Statistics Reports, researchers found that non-Hispanic white adults were significantly less likely than other racial ethnic groups to say it was very important to have a health care provider who shared their culture or understood their background. [3] They also found that minority groups were more likely to report never being able to see a culturally similar health care provider compared with non-Hispanic white adults.



ASSESSMENT: Cultural sensitivity has the potential to enhance equity in health care delivery. [4] Clinicians who lack cultural competency may deliver medical advice that leads to misunderstandings, erodes trust and compromise care. Understanding patients' cultural context and values can increase patient satisfaction, lead to more effective care and improve outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Provide a mechanism for patients to self-report. This is the most important source of information providers should use, as the patient is the expert in their own culture. Ask about their background and other cultural factors that are important to them.
2. Provide culturally relevant, specific resources/support. This will help patients adhere to treatment plans.
3. Be aware of your own cultural biases and assumptions.
 - Accepting and respecting cultural differences, modifying care to be compatible with the patient's culture and expectations, and providing culturally appropriate care will improve health outcomes. [5]
 - Avoid making assumptions about the patient's culture and be more open to receiving their unique perspective on incorporating alternative options that both align with the best treatment plans and honor their cultural beliefs.

Resources: [1] Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. (2020, September). Consider culture, customs, and beliefs: Tool #10. In Health literacy universal precautions toolkit (2nd ed.). <https://www.ahrq.gov/health-literacy/improve/precautions/tool10.html> [2] Office of Minority Health. (n.d.). National standards for culturally and linguistically appropriate services (CLAS) in health care. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/assets/pdfs/EnhancedNationalCLASStandards.pdf> [3] Terlizzi, E. P., Connor, E. M., Zelaya, C. E., Ji, A. M., & Bakos, A. D. (2019, October). Reported importance and access to health care providers who understand or share cultural characteristics with their patients among adults, by race and ethnicity [National Health Statistics Reports No. 130]. National Center for Health Statistics. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr130-508.pdf> [4] Stubbe, D. E. (2020). Practicing cultural competence and cultural humility in the care of diverse patients. *Focus*, 18(1), 49–51. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7011228/> [5] International Council of Nurses. (2013). Cultural and linguistic competence [Position statement]. https://www.icn.ch/sites/default/files/inline-files/B03_Cultural_Linguistic_Competence.pdf (Adopted 2007, reviewed and revised 2013)