Dimensions of Culture
Cross-Cultural Communications for Healthcare Professionals

How the United States is Growing

... (% of U.S. population grew in the past 10 years will come from immigrants, or the children of immigrants. If current trends continue, the population of the United States will reach 400 million in 2050, from 291 million in 2005, and half of the increase will be due to immigrants coming from other countries and their U.S.-born descendants. Of the 22.5 million people...)

“Culture has a dramatic impact on patient care & health outcomes. Cross-cultural communication skills are critical in all health care settings today.”

We provide cross-cultural education, publications, and resources for health care professionals.

Education

Providing culturally-sensitive care depends on health care professionals being able to recognize their own culture, their patient's culture and how both affect patient-provider communication. With this fundamental premise in mind, we offer cross-cultural communications training for health care professionals.

Publications

A variety of publications are available to supplement our cross-cultural communications trainings for health care professionals. For example, our unique series of articles covers a broad range of both cross-cultural health care and culture-specific topics. Check out our Archive on the main menu, where a drop-down menu organizes articles by categories. Oh, you can simply click the button below.

Resources

- Reading Suggestions
- Cultural Group Guides
- Useful Links
- Quality Care & Culture Quiz

www.dimensionsofculture.com
HELPING PATIENTS BECOME HEALTHCARE SMART

Expanding Our Concept of Health Literacy

"It is essential that we expand our concept of health literacy. Every patient has potential for better health understanding. Good communication by healthcare professionals supports patient responsibility and promotes successful participation in a complex system of care."
healthcare-smart.org
How does low health literacy affect your practice?

- Decreased patient safety
- Increased phone calls
- Cancelled appointments
- Patient dissatisfaction

3. Yin, H.S. et al. The Health Literacy of Parents in the United States:
   All of statistics are from 2003 NAAL
The 2003 NAAL measured a range of literacy activities that adults are likely to face in their daily lives.

The health literacy scale measured a range of literacy activities: The capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information.

- Clinical
- Prevention
- Navigation of health care system

9 out of 10 adults are unable to understand basic health care information, leading to poor health outcomes:\(^1\)

- Worse health outcomes
- More hospitalizations
- Greater use of emergency care
- Poor medication adherence
- Poor management of chronic disease

Low Parent Health Literacy Leads to Child Health Disparities

• 46% of parents were unable to follow medication instructions correctly
• 42% of parents were unable to perform nutrition/obesity tasks.
• 40% of parents were unable to perform immunization task.

3. Yin, H.S. et al. The Health Literacy of Parents in the United States:
   All of statistics are from 2003 NAAL
• Only 19.3% of parents were able to fill out health insurance forms correctly.
• More than 2/3 of parents were unable to fill in names and dates of birth on health insurance forms correctly.

Every patient has potential for better health understanding. Good communication by healthcare professionals supports patient responsibility and promotes successful participation in a complex system of care.
Expanding Our Concept of Health Literacy

Step #1: Accessing Care
Step #2: Self-Management
Step #3: Speaking, Reading, Writing
Step #4: Understanding Numbers
Many adults in the United States lack basic awareness of the health services available in their community.
Unreasonable self-sufficiency?

- Making initial appointments
- Locating facilities/transportation
- Following up with specialists
- Scheduling required tests
- Tracking what is often a complex flow of information
Why people fail to seek timely & appropriate care.

- Phone answering systems
- Difficult appointments times
- Problem referrals
- Unresponsive staff/language support
- No triage or advice line available
- Unfamiliar with getting medical records for personal use
- No experience with insurance forms, co-pays, patient billing
Low Parent Literacy Leads to Child Health Disparities

- Only 19.3% of parents were able to fill out health insurance forms correctly.
- More than 2/3 of parents were unable to fill in names and dates of birth on health insurance forms correctly.

Some health literacy challenges are directly related to cultural norms, health beliefs, and language barriers.
SIMPLE FORMS?

- Write from right to left.
- Write very clearly. Sloppy writing will be discarded.
- Fill in every blank.
- For #2 use the Moslem calendar, which begins July 16, A.D. 622.
- Complete this task within 3 minutes.
Spanish Speaking Countries - given, 2 family names

Jose Vargas Zapatero
Vargas is paternal, Zapatero is maternal
NAMING CONVENTIONS

Russian - given, partonymic, surname

*Ekaterina Invanova Smirnova*
Katya - friends/colleagues
Katenka - Family/close friends

based on first name of father used on all legal/identity documents
China - surname, given name

Mao Zedong
You wouldn’t have called him Chairman Zedong
**NAMING CONVENTIONS**

**Arab Countries** - given, father’s first, grandfather, family

Saleh ibn Tariq ibn Khalid al-Fulan.

- *Saleh* is given
- *ibn* “son of”
- *Tariq* is his father’s name
- *Khalid* is Tariq’s father (grandfather)
- *al-Fulan* is family name
SYSTMS OF WRITING THE DATE

- 1/30/14 - U.S and Canada
- 30/1/14 - China, United Kingdom, Mexico
- 2014/1/30 - International System
Step #2: Self-management

The **ability and desire** a patient demonstrates to learn about their health and follow health information.
How can You SUPPORT Self-Management?

- Praise active involvement.
- Confirm understanding - use TEACH BACK !!!
- Break things into steps - recognize success at each step.
- Encourage questions - persist.
- At the private practice level, care coordination and patient navigation services should be available as an extension of provider teaching.

Build patient confidence and mastery.
Step #3: Speaking, Reading & Writing

**Oral communication skills** – ask questions, explain health concerns, understand doctor and staff.

**Basic reading skills** – read instructions, label warnings, insurance/consent forms, follow written treatment plans.
Speaking

- Use plain language.
- Avoid jargon/acronyms.
- Use interpreter services.
- Encourage families to ask questions.
Use teach-back!!!
Reading/ Print Materials

- Offer them as often as possible.
- Appropriate language for the family.
- 4th-6th grade reading level.
- Use materials that have pictures.
■ One out of five American adults reads at the 5th grade level or below.

■ The **average** American reads at the 8th-9th grade level.

■ Most health care materials are written above the 10th grade level.
5th grade sample passage

The Monster in the Barn

Bobby was preparing to go to bed late one evening when he heard a shrill screech coming from the barn outside. Bobby was unsure what was making such an eerie noise so late in the night. He had trouble falling asleep and tossed and turned all night dreaming about the haunting sounds emanating from the barn. When Bobby awakened the following morning, he hurried out to the barn to discover what was causing such a peculiar noise the night prior. He gathered his courage and entered the barn but left befuddled when he could not find what was making such noise. That evening after dinner as the sun was setting, Bobby grabbed a flashlight and set out for the barn.
Simple Familiar Wording

84% of all people understood this label.

Low literate population - 74.4%
(Read at 6th grade or below)

Davis et al. JGIM 2006; 21:847-851
59% of all people understood this label.

Low literate population - 36.5%
(who read at 6th grade or below.)

Davis et al. JGIM 2006; 21:847-851
Numeracy!
Step #4: Understanding and Using Numbers

Numeracy is the ability to understand information presented in numbers.

- Counting, computing numbers
- Interpreting graphs, charts, or tables
- Interpreting percentages and fractions
- Understanding numbers embedded in printed materials
Adults in the U.S. struggle with medication instructions.

- 46% misunderstand common dosing instructions
- 60% struggle with auxiliary instructions when dosing
- 1 in 4 make large dosing errors with pediatric liquid medicine
- 1 in 4 (24%) may exceed maximum daily dose of OTC pain medicine
CROSS-CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Consider different systems of weights and measures.
What is your weight in stones?
What is your weight in kilos?
1/2 cup = ____ oz. = ____ml.
What is your height in centimeters?
Imagine you have just immigrated from Ethiopia where silverware isn’t traditionally used.
Why is taking medicine hard?
Why is taking medicine hard?

- A dynamic behavior (adding, adjusting, removing)
- Multiple drugs, variable doses, multiple devices (pills, injection, inhaler, liquid, nasal, eye drops, lotions)
- Tapered and escalating doses
- Doses dependent on measurement (weight, blood sugar)
- Daily vs. non-daily medicines - hard to establish routine
- Multiple prescribers, pharmacies, varied and sometimes poor instructions
- Brand vs. generic (pills look different, have different names)
How many pills per dose?
How long between doses?
How many pills per day?
How many ml in a teaspoon?

When do I take medicine?
Is twice a day the same as every 12 hours?
Can I take these medicines at the same time?
“DO NOT CHEW OR CRUSH”

“SWALLOW WHOLE or SPRINKLE CONTENTS ON SMALL AMOUNT OF FOOD”

“THIS DRUG SHOULD BE TAKEN ON AN EMPTY STOMACH”

Wall Street Journal, April 2011
MERCILON TABS

EACH NIGHT BEFORE FOOD ONCE DAILY TO BE
TAKEN FOUR TIMES A DAY THREE TIMES A DAY
EACH THREE TIMES DAILY TAKE ONE TAKE TWO
TAKE THREE OR TWO

Warning: follow the printed instructions you have been
given with this medicine.

31 May 11
Pat 33967 P
VAMC PHOENIX, AZ 85012
644 602- (9010/ )
NOV 20, 1996 Fill 1 of 4
30-8972
INSERT ONE RECTALLY BY MOUTH EVERY DAY AS
NEEDED
Qty: 2 BX
HEMORRHOIDAL-HC SUPPOS 12’S
Youtubes.com:

Health Literacy and Numeracy:
A Workshop, Panel 4 - Michael Wolf, PhD, MPH
CONFIRM MEDICATION ACCURACY

- Review with patient each medication they are taking.
  - Have them bring all medicine bottles to the appointment.
  - Ask: “What do you take this medicine for?”
  - “How & when do you take this medicine.”
Ask Me 3

Help your patients learn these 3 questions:
1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is it important for me to do this?

Learn more about ASK ME 3 at NPSF.org
CROSS-CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Completely "foreign" ideas about health and healing contribute to low health literacy in the U.S.
Chronic Disease  Mental Health
Depression and stress are symptoms NOT recognized in many cultures.

- Depression and stress are symptoms NOT recognized in many cultures.
- PHYSICAL symptoms are often accepted as legitimate and morally acceptable expressions of pain.

60% of mental health referrals originate in private practices.
Mental health interventions should be couched in the context of the family.

Build rapport first. Get to know the family’s story.

Frame the solution as a family solution.

Frame the solution (a mental health referral) in THEIR words.