

Cross Cultural Dialogue Enhancement

A culturally competent clinician strives for impartiality, understanding, empathy, patience, respect and trust.

Speak clearly

- Pitch of voice, rhythm, rate of speech, emphasis, and emotions are all aspects of language that vary among cultures.
- Ensure that the patient understands what you are communicating.
- Offer to write instructions down or repeat them using a trained interpreter.
- Avoid jargon, expressions and complicated medical terminology.

Non – verbal communication

- The meaning of facial expressions and silence varies across cultures.
- Avoiding direct eye contact is a sign of respect in some cultures. Smiling may be a sign of agreement, apprehension or showing of politeness.
- Silence could be used to convey non-acceptance or disapproval, as well as agreement.

Respect different health beliefs

- Do not hesitate to show interest in a cross-cultural exchange of information, i.e. "I am interested to know more about how you view this illness in your family" instead of avoiding the subject or completely ignoring it.

Key Questions to Establish a Basis of Understanding

- What do you think may be the reason you have these symptoms?
- Do you have any family or friends who also have this problem?
- What have you tried to get better? i.e. medicines, home remedies, etc (to ascertain if patient is using alternative treatments).
- Have you sought advice from family, friends and religious networks or other people for this problem?
- What kind of treatment are you seeking from me?
- What are the most important results that you hope to achieve in seeking help from me?
- Who would you like to be part of this process (i.e. family, friends, interpreters, healers, community members)?
- Do you understand why you have to come back to the hospital (if follow-up is needed)?
- Do you agree with the diagnosis and recommendations?
- How is this condition perceived in your culture or religion?