

## Module 5 – Culture

### Handout #1 – Health Care Beliefs, Pain, and Food Practices

The following represent 4 of the top countries of origin of immigrants to the U.S.:

Country	Health Care Beliefs	Pain Reactions	Food Practices
Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acute sick care only</li> <li>• Health is believed to be a matter of choice or God's will</li> <li>• Disease influenced by hot and cold imbalances</li> <li>• Males are viewed as being healthier than females or children</li> <li>• Pain or the appearance of blood is used in determining severity of illness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional self-restraint and stoic inhibition of strong feelings and emotional expression are seen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rice and beans provide proteins</li> </ul>
Vietnam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acute sick care only</li> <li>• Practices such as pinching or scratching the area let the <i>bad winds</i> or the unhealthy air currents out of the body and restore health-producing marks or red lines</li> <li>• Medicine to restore the yin-yang balance and the hot-cold equilibrium is important</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pain may be severe before relief is requested</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None reported</li> </ul>
Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health promotion is important</li> <li>• Mental illness is highly disgraceful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People may appear stoic, believing that pain is the will of God and that God will give them the strength to bear it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rice is preferred with every meal</li> </ul>
Mainland China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health promotion is important</li> <li>• Some resist surgery because of a religious belief that they do not own their physical bodies, that the soul or spirit will escape from the body and be lost forever if surgery is performed</li> <li>• Drawing blood may be resisted because of the belief that blood does</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong negative feelings, such as anger and pain, are often suppressed</li> <li>• A display of emotion is considered a weakness of character</li> <li>• Because it is impolite to accept something the first time it is offered, pain relief</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The diet is low in fat</li> <li>• Excessive amounts of soy sauce and dried and preserved foods cause a high sodium intake</li> <li>• Herbs are used to treat symptoms, wounds, disease.</li> </ul>

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	<p>not regenerate; blood is perceived as the source of life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stigma attached to mental illness</li></ul>	<p>interventions must be offered more than once</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The ginseng root is widely used.</li><li>• Raw vegetables and meats are usually not eaten.</li></ul>
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Source: Sorrentino, S., Remmert, L. (2008 & 2017). *Mosby's Textbook for Nursing Assistants*.

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### ACTIVITY #1

#### CASE STUDY #1

##### Hot or Cold

Mrs. Wong is recovering from hip replacement surgery. One morning, a few days after the surgery, Mrs. Wong tells the home care aide how hungry she is. After reviewing the plan of care and finding out that Mrs. Wong is on a regular diet, the home care aide brings Mrs. Wong some breakfast. Later, when the home care aide comes to check on her, she sees that Ms. Wong has not touched her orange juice, cold cereal, and milk. "I thought you were hungry," says the home care aide.

"I am, but the food is cold," Mrs. Wong answers.

"Of course it is," says the home care aide.

"I can't eat cold food," says Mrs. Wong.

The home care aide is puzzled.

- Mrs. Wong could not eat the cold food because she believed that following surgery or childbirth, one must take warm fluids. In the Asian interpretation of the system, because of a "hot" procedure like surgery or childbirth, the body loses heat. Therefore, the heat must be replaced. This belief accounts for Asian resistance to drinking cold water or taking showers after surgery or childbirth.
- When patients refer to hot or cold, they may not be referring to actual temperature.
- Hot/cold systems vary with people's different backgrounds.

#### Discussion Question

What can the home care aide do differently to respect Mrs. Wong's cultural values?

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### **CASE STUDY #2**

#### **Working on the Sabbath**

Sunday morning, Rebecca, a home care patient who is eighty years old, has been having problems with abdominal pain. She feels as if she is coming down with a GI bug.

The aide arrives at Rebecca's house for her late afternoon services; the home care aide discovers Rebecca has had diarrhea in the bed. The stool has dried on the linen and Rebecca's skin. There is stool in multiple locations as the patient has tried to help clean some of it herself. The home care aide says, "We need to keep your skin clean to prevent skin breakdown. Let's clean you up and then we will wash the linens and clean the rest of the stool up."

Rebecca answers, "You may clean me but please do not wash clothes or clean the other stool today."

- The home care aide was unaware that Rebecca is of Protestant faith. Thus, the home care aide was unaware of the religious belief that one should remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. This means that the patient does not believe in working on the Sabbath – this is a time to pray and be mindful of her relationship with God.

#### **Discussion Question**

What can the home care aide do differently to respect Rebecca's cultural values?

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### **CASE STUDY #3**

#### **Prejudice and Discrimination**

John Harris, a sixty-eight-year-old African American male, was scheduled to have his cancerous prostate removed at a government hospital. Two days after scheduling the procedure, he called Karen, his home care aide, in a panic. He had spoken to several friends about his upcoming surgery, and now wanted to know about various forms of alternative treatments. Karen spent about an hour on the phone with him and gave him a great deal of information as well as phone numbers he could call to learn about other options. She realized that he was probably overwhelmed and frightened about his diagnosis.

Right before hanging up, Mr. Harris said, "You know I trust you, Karen; I just don't know if I trust the hospital to take care of me. I have older friends who were subjected to government studies without knowing it back in the 1940's and 1950's." Karen suddenly realized it wasn't just the cancer he feared, but what a white institution might do to him, a black man. The experiments performed on syphilitic black men who were left untreated in order to study the course of the disease are infamous.

- It is no wonder that many African Americans are distrustful of hospitals and white institutions in general. Prejudice and discrimination are real. Not surprisingly, if you have been a frequent victim of discrimination, you are likely to expect it.

#### **Discussion Question**

**What can the home care aide do differently to respect Mr. Harris' cultural values and concerns?**

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### **CASE STUDY #4**

#### **The Garment**

Grace Kettering, an elderly woman who is Mormon, was sent home to recover from hip replacement surgery and is in danger of bed sores. The home care aide is to check for skin breakdown on her backside. Ms. Kettering was asked to remove her clothing in order to check her skin. When the home care aide tried to help Ms. Kettering with changing, she refused to remove her long underwear. The home care aide cannot check for bed sores unless the long underwear is removed.

- Devout Mormons who have attained adult religious status in the church wear "the garment." It resembles short-sleeved long underwear and ends just above the knee. Although not exactly magical, it is considered sacred and is always worn except when being cleaned or while one is bathing. Having to remove the garment associated with God's protection can be distressing to a Mormon patient, especially prior to a medical procedure.

#### **Discussion Question**

**What can the home care aide do to respect Grace Kettering's cultural values?**

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### **CASE STUDY #5**

#### **Respect for Professionals**

Vladimir, newly arrived from Russia, waits with his interpreter at the home of his elderly mother, who is being seen for home care services. Suddenly, a woman dressed in casual clothes bursts into the room. She smiles at Vladimir and says, "Hi, nice to meet you. I'm your mother's home care aide. How are you today?"

Vladimir scowls and asks the interpreter, "Who is this fool?"

- The reason for Vladimir's response toward the home care aide is because of her lack of formality. She did not wear medical attire and was too friendly. Thus, Vladimir lost respect for her as a professional. Many Russian immigrants expect to see symbols of power and status from those who are treating them or their loved ones. For the medical profession, there is an expectation to be dressed in uniform and conduct medical interaction with formality and social distance.

#### **Discussion Question**

What can the home care aide do to respect Vladimir's, and his mother's cultural values?