# Cultural Communications Guide

**Disclaimer:** The information in this guide is intended to provide awareness of cultural practices and beliefs. It is provided as a guide to alert you to some of the ways that culture impacts health care but may not necessarily apply to everyone who identifies with a particular group. It is not to be substituted with medical advice for any medical circumstances or condition and is not intended to be used for medical diagnosis or treatment. Contact your physician or healthcare provider for any health-related concerns.

**Sources:** For a list of sources used to create this document, click [HERE](#).

To suggest changes or additions to this guide, contact [Stacey Lawson](#).

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### Amish

- Past oriented
- The body is the temple of God
- High value is placed on humility, avoiding arrogance or individual vanity.
- Believe that its members are joined together in an effort to become righteous Christians
- A core belief is “Gelassenheit”, or submission to the will of God
- May limit use of electricity and appliances in some Amish sects.
- Comfortable with different treatment modalities and often use such treatments as herbal remedies and folk medicine.
- Diet generally high carbohydrate and sugar
- German is the primary language. May need German translator.
- English not taught until attends Amish Parochial schools
- May not communicate different treatments being used, thinking it is not relevant to other medical treatment.
- Speak to both the husband and wife regarding health care decisions; they consider themselves as partners in family life.
- Disability is generally feared more than death. If treatment is refused by the Amish patient, be sure to thoroughly educate him/her if disability from his/her illness is a potential possibility.
- Prefer to deliver babies at home; if unable to deliver at home, will want to be discharged from the hospital as soon as possible after birth
- The Amish may tend to show little pain even when in great pain.
- Amish tend to have more rare genetic disorders (i.e. maple syrup urine disease, Cohen Syndrome). A child with disabilities is referred to as a special child and is accepted as God’s will.
- Will require very careful explanations relative to need for treatments, tests, etc. because of reluctance to spend money unnecessarily. Elderly may feel the need to ration health care to avoid expending too much of community resources.
- Most Amish need to have church (bishop, community) permission to be hospitalized, as it is the community who will come together to help pay the costs. Most do not have health insurance as it is a “worldly product” and may show a lack of faith in God.
- Generally accept technology used within the hospital for treatment purposes as long as it benefits the client
- Transplants acceptable except heart transplant (heart is soul of body).
- Brauche is frequently sought as a method of treatment. It involves physical manipulation similar to therapeutic touch in which the healer places his or her hands near the patient’s head or abdomen to draw illness from the body
- Prefer to die at home.

### Anglican, Episcopalian (Church of England)

- Traditional Christian doctrines
- Episcopal form of church government, a system of bishops
- Place a stronger emphasis on the position and status of the clergy
- Believe the gift of reason gives rise to the possibility of sin
- Christian initiation by water baptism
- Most receive Holy Communion regularly
- Confession is part of most worship services
- May choose to fast on Fridays and during Lent
- Christian pastoral care in hospital setting is carried out in the name of Christ
- Pray with a dying person and the immediate family
- Upon death, each body should be handled with the greatest care respecting this dignity
- Some believe in spiritual healing
- Sick may request anointing with blessed oil
### Bahai Faith

- Believe in the oneness of humanity, God and religion
- The equality of women and men
- There has only ever been one religion; the religion of God
- Abolition of extreme wealth and poverty
- Eradication of racial and religious prejudice
- Basic education for all children

**Basic Beliefs & Practices**

- Annual fast lasting from sunrise to sunset March 2 to March 20
- Consumption of alcohol or mind-altering drugs is forbidden.

**Nutritional/Dietary Preferences**

- Daily private prayer
- Involvement in partisan politics is not allowed
- Backbiting, gossiping is forbidden
- Marriage requires consent of both parties

**Communication Awareness**

- No specific requests
- There are no priests or authorities associated with the Bahai Faith
- Members of the local community may gather together in hospital or the patient’s home for healing prayers
- Permitted to donate their bodies for medical research and organ donation
- Autopsies may be performed when required by law
- It is a Bahai law that Bahais are buried and not cremated
- Embalming of the body is discouraged
- The Bahai Spiritual assembly should be contacted in the area where a Bahai dies
- There are no special requirements for the body to be treated in any special way, except that it is to be washed in the usual manner and wrapped in shroud of cotton or silk
- Body must not be transported more than 1 hr. distance from place of death

### Baptist

- Believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth
- Jesus Christ, God’s only Son
- Believe in following the Bible in all matters of faith and practice
- Practice baptism of believers, not of infants

**Basic Beliefs & Practices**

- Baptism and Holy Communion are considered the two sacraments that Baptists practice
- Pray with such a person and the immediate family
- “laying of hands”
- Baptist churches desire the offer of pastoral and spiritual care to their hospitalized parishioners
- At the time of death, each body should be handled with the greatest care respecting this dignity
- There are no religious objections to the conducting of an autopsy

**Communication Awareness**

- Patient Care/Handling of Death
### Buddhism

- Based on the life and teachings of the spiritual master, Sakyanumi Buddha. Teachings often termed “Dharma”.
- At the heart of Buddhism, is the denial of an “I” as a separate self-existing entity.
- Life is a constant state of suffering, and illnesses are punishment for selfishness and transgression in this life and past lives (this belief results in a passive approach to the treatment of disease)
- The Four Noble Truths
  - Dukkha (suffering)
  - The Arising of Dukkha
  - The Cessation of Dukkha
  - The Path
- Since prayer is part of the healing and cleansing process, prayer and meditation are important to enable medications and other medical treatment to assist with healing.
- Chanting is used to create peace of mind and an atmosphere of positive energy and tranquility
- Each of the Four Noble Truths explain suffering. Buddhists practice lengthy rituals/counseling/meditation in dealing with suffering and acceptance of death.
- Many Buddhists are strict vegetarians.
- Some holy days include fasting from dawn to dusk but considerations are allowed for the frail and elderly for whom fasting could create problems.

### Christian Science

- The reason is that, since God, who is Spirit, created man in His image an likeness, that creation must be wholly spiritual.
- Have no ordained ministers or clergy
- While physicality, disease, an death are regarded as impositions on this true nature, they are not ignored, but instead seen as an imperfect view of God and man, to be replaced by tangible understanding of the spiritual reality of things.
- They believe that sin is a disease and death does not originate in God. Sin and disease are considered distortions of the human mind.
- Believers will usually opt for lowest possible dosage of medications, and avoid anything that interferes with being able to maintain cognitive faculties for prayer and personal healing.
- There is no church policy mandating church members’ health care decisions.
- Prayer and mental/physical balance are seen as the necessary elements for healing to occur.
- Central to practice of Christian Science healing is the idea that man’s true nature is actually spiritual.
- No specific restrictions. Alcohol, tobacco, and drugs are avoided.
- Christian Scientists generally do not seek out medical care often preferring a Christian Science practitioner.
- The Christian Science church maintains it’s own skilled nursing facilities.
- Death is considered a natural part of life and invasive life-sustaining options are usually refused.
- Christian Scientists do not see death as an escape to spiritual life, but as the last, or ultimate, material obstacle to be overcome by a full understanding of spiritual life.
### Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons)

- Believe in God, Jesus Christ & the Holy Ghost
- Mormon Law is to obey all of God’s commandments
- Prayer provides comfort and is believed to aid in healing.
- Those who are priesthood holders will often come and give blessings of healing to those who are sick.
- Monday nights are set aside for “Family Home Evening” - a time for families to gather together.
- Church teaches that all individuals will be resurrected and the good will go to the “Celestial Kingdom”.
- Believe men will be punished for their own sins

### Nutritional Preferences and/or Dietary Requirements

- Fast the first Sunday of every month.
- Healthy diet is part of the LDS teachings.
- Latter Day Saints abstain from tobacco, alcohol, and beverages such as coffee, tea and some sodas that contain caffeine. They may drink beverages similar to coffee and tea, such as some browned-grain beverages. The beverage restriction is not a church doctrine but fits into ways to promote healthy diet.
- Alcohol should only be used to wash human bodies, not for consumption

### Patient Care/Handling of Death

- Receiving the Sacraments is important
- Special prayers for healing may be said
- Holy communion administered in hospital
- Holy communion or other blessings are offered to dying patients but not required.
- No obligation to prolong life when death is imminent; however, basic care would not be withdrawn.
- No “last rites,” but special prayers are provided for the dead and to support the family or others.

### Greek Orthodox

- Are Christian believing in the Holy Trinity - God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit
- Prayer and miracles are part of the healing beliefs.
- During Lent members of the Greek Orthodox church are expected to abstain from meat and all animal products e.g. milk, cheese, butter, eggs
- Greek Orthodox do not eat meat or dairy on Wednesdays, Fridays, and most holy days.
- Fasting and/or abstinence are observed during the 40 days prior to Christmas, and the 49 days prior to Easter, with exceptions made for frail or ill persons.
- A seriously ill person may be excused from following dietary obligations during Lent
- Family members will probably want to remain with the sick person at all times
- No obligation to prolong life when death is imminent; however, basic care would not be withdrawn.
- No “last rites,” but special prayers are provided for the dead and to support the family or others.
Hinduism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Beliefs/Practices</th>
<th>Nutritional Preferences and/or Dietary Requirements</th>
<th>Communication Awareness</th>
<th>Patient Care/Handling of Death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* (Note: “Hindu” refers to the religion, and “Hindi” refers to the primary language of India)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The belief in cyclic birth and reincarnation lies at the center of Hinduism</td>
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<tr>
<td>The status, condition, and caste of each life is determined by behavior in the last life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Believe in mutual tolerance; all approaches to God are valid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aim to relate holistically to everything living and non-living</td>
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<td>Hindu laws are situationally flexible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Believe in a tradition of medicine called Ayurveda (harmony of mind, body, and soul - interconnectedness between the universe and the body)</td>
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<td>Believers hold that faith and prayer can heal.</td>
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<td>Belief in right hand as more holy, left hand as unclean may guide some hand use. The left hand is used to wash the body and to dispose of bodily waste and secretions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humankind's goal is to break free of this imperfect world and reunite with God</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eating must be done with the right hand, and placement of an IV may also be preferred in the right hand to promote clean healing.</td>
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<td>Marriages are often arranged by parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karma shapes one's current life and actions now affect this life and next</td>
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<tr>
<td>The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKON), more commonly known as “Hare Krishna” is a branch from the Hindu tradition.</td>
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<td>Boys of priestly families are initiated at age 15</td>
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<td>Cow is sacred</td>
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<td>Many, but not all are vegetarians, particularly related to beef, other meats, and eggs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some are strictly vegetarian and may even express discomfort (or refuse) dishes/utensils which may have been touched by animal products.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Many holy days include fasting. May occasionally fast eating only fruit, milk or juice</td>
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<tr>
<td>According to Ayurvedic principles, diet is considered critical to the body's homeostasis - balance &quot;hot&quot; foods (like chicken, garlic, and cloves) with &quot;cold&quot; foods (like yogurt, oranges, and rice)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some abstain completely from alcohol</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited eye contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do not touch while talking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do not try to force foods when religiously forbidden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medications made of animal products may not be acceptable, since they invite bad karma. Inform patient so they can decide.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading spiritual books, and scriptures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Praying</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important for Karma to leave this life with as little negativity as possible to insure a better life next birth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Death marks a passage since the soul has no beginning or end. At death the soul may be reborn as another person, and one's Karma is carried forward.</td>
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<td>For a dying patient, the priest may tie a thread around the neck or wrist to signify a blessing; this thread should not be removed until just before death.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holy water &amp; basil leaves may be place on the body; sacred threads may be tied around wrists &amp; neck.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The deceased arms should be straightened.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The priest will pour water into the mouth of the body</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family will request to wash the body</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eldest son is responsible for funerals and cremation and cremation is generally done the day of death</td>
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<tr>
<td>Embalming or beautifying the body is forbidden</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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### Basic Beliefs & Practices

- Belief in one God, “Allah,” and Mohammed, his Prophet and Messenger
- Obligatory Prayers, five times a day - need to wash before prayers
- Prayers are done facing the east, toward the sacred place in Mecca
- Zakat, a compulsory giving of alms to the poor
- All outcomes whether death or healing are seen as predetermined by Allah.
- Pilgrimage to Mecca is the goal of the faithful
- Five pillars of Islam
  - Declaration of Faith
  - Prayers (Salah)
  - Fasting
  - Zakah
  - Hajj – Pilgrimage
- Seven attitudes of faith
  - Belief in the oneness of Allah
  - Belief in the Angels of Allah
  - Belief in the Revelations of Allah
  - Belief in the prophets of Allah
  - Belief in the Day of Judgement
  - Belief in Predestination
  - Belief in Resurrection after death

### Nutritional Preferences and/or Dietary Requirements

- Kitchen staff should be aware that Muslims do not eat pork and its products (bacon, ham, sausages, etc.) and that halal food should be available for Muslim patients (Halal is a type of Kosher)
- If halal food cannot be provided, Muslims should be given the choice of having seafood, eggs, fruit, and vegetables
- Other meats must meet ritual requirements and many use Kosher (Jewish ritually prepared) foods since these meet the requirements of Islamic believers as well.
- During the holy days of Ramadan (29 days in December and/or January), neither food nor drink is taken between sunrise and sunset, though frail, ill and young children are exempt.
- Do not force foods when it is religiously forbidden
- Consuming intoxicants, such as alcohol, is prohibited

### Communication Awareness

- Language: Language of the country and some English
  - Decision making is often done by the male (father, husband)
  - Muslims frequently express gratitude to God and ask for his mercy.
  - Smoking is prohibited
  - Limit eye contact
  - Do not touch while talking
  - Doubtful things are to be avoided

### Patient Care/Handling of Death

- Washing facilities should be made available in the ward and in the toilets in the form of a simple plastic container to wash private parts after use
- A room should be made available as a prayer room, however, any clean and quiet place will suffice
- The hospital or health institution should know the direction of Makkah (Mecca). Northeast (traditional) or Southeast (Mercator) in USA depending on belief.
- Abortion before 130 days is treated as discarded tissue; after 130 days, as a human being
- As the right hand is used for washing, it is appropriate to place IV in left arm/hand
- Males (husband, father) often make medical decisions and should be included in discussion.
- Head of family may be given negative prognoses and patient protected.
- Muslim families may ask fewer questions of staff than others as asking questions can be considered a sign of mistrust.
- Prayer is offered but need not be done by an Imam.
- Prefer same-sex physician
- Medicines with alcohol or porcine derivatives (includes gelatin) should not be used
- Patients should be allowed to dress according to their requirements
- Medical examination techniques should ensure minimum exposure of the patient
- It is important for dying patients to face Mecca and to die facing Mecca. The movement of the bed to such a position is deeply appreciated
- Before death, confession of sins with family present
- Koran, the holy book, is recited near the dying person
- As the patient is dying, a pillow should be put under the head to elevate it above the rest of the body
- Next of kin or religious leader (Imam) should be notified immediately
- The arms of the deceased must remain at his/her sides
- The body must be handled as little as possible; after death, only relatives or priest may touch the body
- The body is bathed and clothed in white and buried within 24 hours
- May oppose autopsy

### Mode of Dress/Modesty

- Men are to dress modestly not imitating women
- Women's clothing must cover the entire body, including the head, excluding the face and hands
Jehovah’s Witness

- Dedication to God and to do his will
- Believe that all religious teaching should be subjected to this test of agreement with the scriptures
- There is high regard for the medical professionals, and strong religious concerns related to use of blood products, transfusion, and surgery or injury that may require blood transfusions.
- Because the body is considered sacred and must remain whole, blood transfusions are rejected for religious reasons.
- Pre-operative banking of one’s own blood products is also prohibited.
- Death is a state of total unconsciousness
- Baptism by immersion identifies that person as a minister of God
- Only 144,000 of Jesus’ faithful apostles will reign with him in heaven – other faithfuls will live forever on a restored earth
- Avoid food that contain blood
- The scriptures are not interpreted to contain any dietary restrictions.
- Believe that if blood is withdrawn from the body, it is to be poured out onto the ground
- Support and help would be obligation of the family first then of the local congregation
- No last rites although they may want the support of Kingdom Hall elders for prayer and scriptures.
- Death is believed to be a deep sleep while believers wait for Jehovah to transform the world. At that time the dead will be given new life.
- Medical intervention is used when necessary as is hospitalization
- No blood transfusions, blood or blood products, sterilization or acceptance of organ donation are permitted.
- Information on specific issues regarding bloodless medicine should be sought out as necessary.
- Donating organs, blood volume expanders and most surgical procedures are acceptable.
- No last rites or similar are required
- Expected to dress neatly and modestly
### Jewish/Judaism

- Many Jews are from Eastern European countries
- Behavior and communication are defined by role and status
- Beliefs are based on the Torah, which is also the first five books of the Bible, and the Talmud, a book which interprets the Torah.
- One indivisible God exists by whose will the universe and all that is in it was created
- Israel is the Jewish holy land and traditional homeland
- Sabbath is from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday and is a time for prayer, inward reflection. Work of any kind is prohibited on the Sabbath (Orthodox)
- Candles are lit to celebrate the Sabbath (electric candelabras are acceptable in hospital)
- It is customary in some groups to invite other families in for Friday evening Sabbath dinner
- Reform movement allows women to be ordained as Rabbis (clergy)
- Orthodox and some Conservatives maintain a Kosher diet.
- Orthodox or Kosher involves no mixing of meat with dairy, and separate cooking and eating utensils are used for preparation and consumption.
- “Keeping Kosher” is predominantly an Orthodox practice.
- When food has passed Kosher laws of preparation a symbol (K) appears on the label.
- Many holy days include a fasting period.
- Kosher food is prepared according to Jewish law under Rabbinical supervision
- Eating of “unclean” (non-Kosher) animals is forbidden
- Blood is taboo in foods (blood is synonymous with life)
- Illness is grounds for violating dietary laws e.g. client with congestive heart failure does not have to use Kosher meats, which are high in sodium
- Orthodox men do not touch women, except for their wives
- Touch only for hands-on care
- Very talkative and known for their friendliness
- Stoic and authoritative
- Appreciate family accommodation
- Jewish law demands that they seek complete medical care
- Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday and ends at sundown on Saturday, unless for lifesaving reasons, medical and surgical procedures should not be scheduled
- Circumcision is considered a sacred ritual
- In Orthodox group, birth control is discouraged
- Donor transplants are not acceptable to Orthodox Jews, but acceptable to Conservative and Reform
- Organ donation is acceptable if it will save the life of another human being.
- Blood and blood products are acceptable as part of medical treatment
- Psalms and the last prayer of confession (vidui) are held at bedside.
- At death, arms are not crossed, and any clothing or bandages with patient’s blood should be prepared for burial with person.
- It is important that the whole person be buried together.
- Death: Cremation is discouraged
- Autopsy is permitted in less strict groups. Never in Orthodox group unless required by law
- Orthodox believe that entire body, tissues, organs, amputated limbs, and blood sponges need to be available to family for burial with the person
- Do not cross hands in postmortem care
- Burial of body should occur within 24 hrs. of death
- Someone should stay with the dying client so that the soul will not feel alone
- Dying client is encouraged to recite the confessional/ the affirmation of faith if possible before death
- Son or nearest relative may desire to close the eyes and mouth of dead family member
- Judaic law requires that the body not be left alone
**Lutheran**

- People are saved only by God's grace, without any human effort
- People become forgiven children of God by faith in Jesus Christ
- Believe in two sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion

**Basic Beliefs & Practices**

- May appreciate a visit from their Pastor
- Bible readings and prayer may be offered, and/or a bedside celebration of the Sacrament
- The body is placed in the hands of the funeral director

**Nutritional/Dietary Preferences**

- Clergy wear clerical collars as a sign of their office
- Lay persons have no code of dress

**Communication Awareness**

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**Patient Care/Handling of Death**

- Clergy wear clerical collars as a sign of their office
- Lay persons have no code of dress

**Mode of Dress/Modesty**

- Clergy wear clerical collars as a sign of their office
- Lay persons have no code of dress

**American Indian, Native American Spirituality**

- Also see American Indian/Native American in “Cultural Community” section.
- Native Americans stress the development of the inner life. The goal is wholeness and harmonious balance to fulfill the life cycle.
- Native Americans come from a tradition of belief in the world of spirits who make their presence known through natural phenomena. There is a great respect for the earth and nature and a focus on working in harmony with the environment.
- Different tribal cultures view the spirit world in their own particular way and this influences particular beliefs and rituals within these communities.
- Prayers can take a variety of forms such songs, dances, meditation, ritual offerings such as sprinkling corn meal, work/artistic endeavors.
- A common offering has been in burning, smoking or ceremonially depositing tobacco.
- There may be many rituals which revolve around the calendar and lunar and solar observations (fasting, dance ceremonies).
- There may also be many rituals revolving around stage of life passages.
- Some may use peyote, a cactus that creates a hallucinogenic effect. Used in ritual
- May ask to put up a “soul catcher” (circular frame with woven pattern and feathers). May carry medicine bundles.
- Medicine men and women are still revered.
- No specific restrictions
- Health care providers need to understand the non-verbals, a Native American may have little to say and may converse in a low tone. A quiet setting is best.
- Some tribes believe that speaking something aloud causes it to happen and will avoid discussing negative medical outcomes.
- Note-taking can be considered taboo. They are used to an oral tradition. Use a conversational approach if possible.
- Tribal Elders may be empowered to make healthcare decisions for family or tribe members.
- Believe that illness is a price to be paid and that healing takes time.
- Belief that healing takes place within the context of relationship with healer & ritual is important in this.
- Healing is about restoring balance to mind, body and spirit and healthcare attends to both body and spirit.
- Belief that death may have many outcomes. Some believe in reincarnation, others that humans return as ghosts and others that the spirit goes to another world.
- Involve family and/or Elders in discussion of specific death rituals.
- No specific requirement.

**Basic Beliefs & Practices**

- That Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the Saviour of the world; anyone who believes in this Jesus may claim forgiveness and a real relationship with him.
- Two sacraments are the Lord’s Supper and Baptism of believers
- Some regard drinking alcoholic beverages as sinful
- There are no obligatory dietary restrictions; some may personally practice abstinence and fasting
- Prayers of healing
- There are no religious objections to receiving blood transfusions or receiving organs for transplantation
- Pastor or elder should be called for ill person
- Believe science should be used for relief of suffering
- Embalm the deceased
- Both cremation and burial are accepted

**Nutritional/Dietary Preferences**

- Two sacraments are the Lord’s Supper and Baptism of believers
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- There are no obligatory dietary restrictions; some may personally practice abstinence and fasting
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**Communication Awareness**

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### Protestantism

- Miracles can happen.
- Prayer is a strong healer, including prayer by others even when the ill person has lost faith.
- There are many sects of Protestant religions which include: Seventh Day Adventist, Baptist, Lutheran, United Methodist, Quaker, Pentecostal, Universalism, and many more.
- Often defined as any Christian denomination which is not Roman Catholic or Orthodox Christian.
- Western medicine is usually held in high regard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Beliefs/Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No special or universal food beliefs are common to Protestant religions, although there may be regional or cultural beliefs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual cultural beliefs are accepted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feasting, or social gathering involving food are common to all Protestant and Catholic churches, with some secular pride in who has the best &quot;pot lucks,&quot; a gathering in which people bring a dish to share, and little planning as to what will be brought occurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These vary widely within Protestant religions - see Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, etc. for more specific information on particular denominations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial services rather than funerals, and cremation rather than burial are more common in Protestant religions than in other sects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Roman Catholicism

- The Sacrament of Reconciliation includes confession of one's sins to put things right for the individual to experience or be open to the love and forgiveness of God. Done before accepting Holy Communion.
- The Sacrament of the Sick, (also associated with "Last Rites") includes anointing with oil and prayers.
- These are two important sacraments for healing.
- Miracles of healing and holy water are valued.
- Prayer, particularly those that provide a blessing, are important before and during medical procedures.
- Prayer rituals can be based around a Rosary, a special string of beads used for prayer meditation.
- Priests and nuns are considered devoted to the church and may not marry.
- The priest is seen as the intermediary between the believer and God.

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<td>During the 40 days before Easter (called Lent), Catholics may abstain from foods that they personally select as penance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Catholics may refrain from eating meat on all Fridays, though this has not been a church practice for many years.</td>
</tr>
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### Santeria (Afro-Caribbean)

- Healing involves fixing the spirit through investigation by Babalawo, and can include cleansing, herbs and diet.
- Curses or evil eye are common beliefs.
- Where Chinese herbal medicine is available, the healers may use them as sources for unusual medicines.
- Genetic disorders, birth marks, and some illnesses may be seen as caused by curses, requiring spiritual investigation and cleansing.
- Nothing particularly unique other than prayer and service to the right spirits can result in healing.

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<td>Food can have negative and positive effects.</td>
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<td>There is strong belief in food possessing hot and cold healing properties, as well as the use of herbal remedies provided by Santeros, Santeras or Babalawo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleansing ceremonies may include animal sacrifices of chickens, doves, pigeons, or goats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No specific beliefs other than some people take vows to &quot;serve&quot; certain spirits which means that they must consume certain foods associated with these spirits on the days of the week dedicated to those spirits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No set or clear belief.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some believe in reincarnation, while others believe in a heaven that is much like the heaven of Christians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At death one's spirit is freed from the body and needs protection so it will not fall into the hands of someone who may capture it and misuse the spirit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babalawo may be called to provide a special cleansing ceremony after death, to clean the body and protect the spirit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The body is considered the temple of God and should be meticulously cared for to keep it healthy for the service and glory of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptism is performed by water immersion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Communion is celebrated quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death is a state of temporary unconsciousness, awaiting the resurrection at Christ’s return</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutritional Preferences and/or Dietary Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco, alcohol, caffeine, and certain foods are avoided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-vegetarians refrain from eating any foods derived from any animal having a cloven hoof that chews its cud, such as pork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shellfish is also not consumed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May refuse treatments and surgery during the Sabbath, dusk on Friday to dusk on Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May desire communion or baptism when ill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family may request that family member be anointed with oil at the time of death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amniocentesis is acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autopsy is Acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth control has no restrictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood and blood products as a treatment are acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cremation is preferred and generally as soon as possible. Autopsy permitted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sikhism

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have three names - given name, title [Singh for men, Kaur for women] and a family name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe in One, Universal. Formless, Timeless God of all people, Who is the creator of universe &amp; all living beings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in equality, birth after death, karma, non-violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No specific holy days. Do not believe any one day is holier than another, but do have festival days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living a good life means meditation, honest work, charity and service to humanity and God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on collective (versus individual) and on purity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During times of sickness and disease, Sikhs pray to seek God's help, remember Waheguru (God's name) to obtain peace, ask for forgiveness, and recite or listen to Gurbani, the sacred hymns. Sikh patients may request audiotapes of Keertan (sacred music) be played by their bedside.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat prepared in a ritualistic way for another religion, such as Halal or Kosher, is forbidden. Jhatka meat (in which the animal has been killed quickly without suffering or religious ritual) may be acceptable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other dietary restrictions are a matter of conscience. Some Sikh are vegetarian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No alcohol, tobacco or other intoxicants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May prefer healthcare provider of same sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When possible, consult the patient and family before procedures requiring the removal of hair (both male and female).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily bathing and personal hygiene care should be provided - purity is a significant issue. Hair can be dried naturally or with an electric hair dryer. Hair should be combed daily at a minimum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many combine conventional Western healthcare practices with alternative practices, including homeopathy, ayurveda, and naturopathy, and it is common to take herbal medicines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organ transplants and blood transfusions are accepted. Advanced directives are individual choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When possible, avoid interrupting prayer or meditation when patient care can be delayed. Need privacy when performing prayer rituals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikh cultural and religious practice includes visiting the sick. Family members, children and well wishers may want to visit frequently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male infants are not circumcised. Separating mother and baby may be resisted. Infants may be required to wear religious symbols e.g. “Kara” (a steel bracelet).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow the family and Sikh Granthi (Sikh Priest), to follow Sikh traditions for preparing the dead body for funeral. 5Ks should remain with body. Remove only medical apparatuses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cremation is preferred and generally as soon as possible. Autopsy permitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public displays of grief at the funeral such as crying out loud are discouraged. Sikhs console themselves with the recitation of their sacred hymns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observant Sikhs may wear the 5 Ks, they may prefer to wear on their person at all times if possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kesh - uncut hair - conforms to acceptance of God's will (a gift from God)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kangha - wooden comb - kept in hair (symbolizes cleanliness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kara - steel bracelet (symbolizes link to God and self restraint)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kacerhra - short breaches (symbolizes purity of moral character)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirpan - ceremonial sword (symbolizes commitment to truth and justice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikh men wear turbans (dastar) which they must retie each day. Sikh females often wear a scarf. Being asked to remove turban/scarf may cause great embarrassment. Touching turban is likely to cause offense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removal of undergarments, by men or women may cause great embarrassment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If turban must be removed, it should be given to the family or placed with the patient's personal belongings. Do not place the headdress with the shoes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PHP Cultural Communications Guide

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<tr>
<th>United Church of Australia</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Jesus Christ is God's son who died for our sins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- If we believe in him we will go to heaven for eternity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Forgiveness is offered to us from God</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Bible is the Word of God</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Prayers for healing and comfort</td>
<td>Patient Care/Handling of Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Holy Communion if the person requests it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Contact minister</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Conversation with them and their loved ones concerning any issues not dealt with and whether confession and forgiveness are needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legend:**
- Basic Beliefs/Practices
- Nutritional Preferences (Dietary Requirements)
- Communication Awareness
- Patient Care/Handling of Death
- Mode of Dress/Modesty

Click HERE to return to the group list.
## African American

- Clergy should be allowed to participate when appropriate
- Religious faith and prayer is thought to have a substantial potential for healing
- Perceive that the individual exists as part of a community
- May believe that illness results from discord with one's surroundings or from evil influences/spirits
- "Natural" illness results from sinful behavior or failure to take care of the body, while "unnatural" illness is the work of the devil
- Very present oriented, which may interfere with preventive behaviors—may also tend toward fatalism
- Belief in God, prayer, and the Bible are thought to protect people from illness or misfortune and serve to enhance the effects of Western medicine
- Believe that one should avoid a draft while sweating to protect against colds and pneumonia (more susceptible to colds when "pores are open"—very young people, very old people, and fertile women are thought to be more "open" and vulnerable)
- Health and welfare are God's gifts to give or take
- Privacy for prayer is important
- Some regional accents depend on the region in which people are born or raised; some regions have language differences
- More present oriented, may have strong future-oriented behaviors
- Predominant religions are Roman Catholicism, Protestant, and Islam

### Basic Beliefs & Practices

- Diets are frequently high in fat and sodium
- Believe that one can regulate anemia ("low blood") by consuming "blood builder" foods like beets, carrots, grape juice, red wine, and red meat, especially pork
- Frequently lactose-intolerant
- Confirm meanings of words without using a condescending approach
- May be sensitive to impersonal remarks or hasty treatment
- Prefer personalized interactions that include a greeting, an introduction of the providers to the patient, and a handshake
- Close friends may be accepted as family and called "Aunt", "Uncle", "Brother", or "Sister"
- "Falling out" refers to fainting, and "low blood" refers to anemia
- Blood may be described as too much, too little, sweet, bitter, thin, bad, high, or low
- May prefer to be greeted and/or addressed by Mr. and Mrs rather than by their first names (African Americans from the southeastern US may prefer to be addressed by "Sir" or "Ma'am"
- Frequent use of words that may be classified as slang, especially among teenagers and young adults
- Less likely to view illness as a burden

### Nutritional Preferences and/or Dietary Requirements

- Healthcare practitioners may offer to pray with patient if all parties involved feel comfortable with it
- Strong religious faith may lead to a preference for life-sustaining procedures
- Recent immigrants from Africa or the Caribbean (or older, rural, or low income African Americans) may use folk remedies
- May seek medical treatment after exhausting traditional remedies like teas, tonics, and poultices made with aloe vera, garlic, beets, poke greens, lemon, and other plants
- May not see the use of blood tests, either because of a mistrust of the medical system or because they believe that one should maintain the proper balance of blood in the body
- Friends and extended family networks play an important role in successful treatment and healing, as well as in treatment decisions
- Whenever possible, educate the family about the illness and the benefits of compliance with treatment plans
- May loudly express pain
- Herbal remedies
- May resist health care because illness is "will of God"
<table>
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<th>Communication Awareness</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>American</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Christian and Jewish beliefs are prominent</td>
<td>- Beef, Chicken, Potatoes, Vegetables, Fast foods, Ethnic foods</td>
<td>- Talkative, Shake hands, Not much touching during conversation, Prefer to gather information for decision making, Some hugging and kissing, mainly between women</td>
<td>- Family members and friends visit in small groups, Expect high-quality care</td>
<td></td>
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### American Indian, Native American

- The Indian Way consists of families working together to solve problems.
- American Indian cultures are rooted in family ties, a unique attachment and respect for their natural surroundings and a distinct spirituality.
- Native Americans are usually very concerned and dedicated to maintaining their tribal tradition, native language and cultural identity.
- Family represents the cornerstone for the social and emotional well-being of individuals & communities.
- Extended family is typical and is important. Any illness concerns the entire family.
- The primary relationship is the grandparents, rather than the parents. Grandparents are the primary caregivers and providers of training and discipline in the family.
- Parent roles include not only the biological parents, but those who have a sibling relation to the biological parents.
- The individual tribe determines roles and family obligations.
- American Indians perceive time as cyclical rather than linear, geared around personal and seasonal rhythms rather than external clocks and calendars.
- Traditional American Indian culture sees harmony with natural forces as a way of life.
- American Indians share material goods and believe that "what's yours is mine and what's mine is everyone's".
- American Indian patients and families may have varying degrees of identification with the tribe, though many are wary of non-Indian caregivers until they develop a level of trust and comfort.

### Basic Beliefs & Practices

- Culturally sensitive, non-directive approaches, which incorporate the use of storytelling, metaphor and paradoxical interventions are recommended.
- American Indians identify themselves as belonging to a particular tribe, band or clan. Each tribe's customs and values are distinct and critical to individual identity and they may differ on many lines, such as how they view or stigmatize disease or how comfortable they are with seeking treatment.
- Cousins are all referred to as "brother" and "sister".
- Many American Indian cultures do not have a term for "in-law".
- Native Americans value listening. Periods of silence are common. Silence may indicate respect, that the individual is forming thoughts or that they are waiting for a signal that it is the right time to speak. Don't rush.
- Silence, embellished metaphors and indirectness are forms of communication not resistance.
- Direct eye contact may be avoided out of respect or concern for soul loss/theft.
- Loudness is often associated with aggressiveness and should be avoided.
- American Indians are sensitive to non-verbal communication, particularly when it seems that nothing is taking place. How one enters a room, what is in the room and how one responds to silence are all forms of communication.

### Communication Awareness

- Networking and the use of ritual are favored over strategic interventions and brief therapy models.
- May judge physicians and therapists based on who they are rather than what their credentials are.
- Decision-making varies with kinship structure; patients will generally make their own decisions.
- Stoicism is highly valued and patients may not express pain; offer pain medication when the condition warrants it even if patient does not appear to be in pain.
- American Indian medicine refers to a traditional and specific cultural approach to health and life for a person, rather than a treatment for a disease or illness.
- Some tribes may prefer to avoid discussion of terminal prognosis; others will use information to make appropriate preparations.
- The approach of an American Indian “medicine person” is holistic, involving healing the body and the troubled soul. Caregivers should be aware of any contact the patient is having with medicine people and understand that it is generally beneficial.
- Some American Indians are practicing Christians and this group may also consult medicine people.
- Common approaches to dealing with illness are prayer meetings, herbal medicines and healing rituals.
- After death, some may want to leave a window open for the soul to leave at death; others may orient the patient's body to a cardinal direction before death.
- Many American Indians utilize both traditional and Western practices, viewing both as vital to the healing process.
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<td>Privacy is important</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value control, freedom, self determination, personal responsibility, independence, individuality, stoic keeping up appearances, work and moderation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wary of affiliation and attachment and often prefer distance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure is often ascribed to personal weakness or inadequacy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future orientation (youth focused) toward achievement and dominance over nature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct eye contact is expected</td>
<td>Communication Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglos may have lower levels of verbal interaction and be more likely to distance themselves.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be less verbal about their pain and there is often a focus on stoicism as a response to problems. Often “suffer in silence” as to not burden others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May have difficulties asking for assistance and sharing issues or problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk is used to accomplish a goal. Words are valued for their utilitarian aspect. They tend to be literal, parsimonious and careful with word choice.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional control is expected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to avoid direct eye contact with members of the opposite sex to avoid any hint of sexual impropriety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual expects to know details of conditions</td>
<td>Patient Care/Handling of Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making by individual for self, or by either parent for child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence is valued; self-care will generally be accepted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patients will generally tend to be stoic, although wish for pain medication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prenatal care is generally sought</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient will generally want to know diagnosis and prognosis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organ donations &amp; autopsies are acceptable, unless forbidden by religion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cremation or burial is acceptable, unless one is preferred by religion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May prefer to be left alone when sick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appalachian</th>
<th>Basic Beliefs &amp; Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kinship (familialism) is a priority, valuing connection of family/in-group/community members.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status is attained by the respect of family/friends and “living right” and less by education, income or title/position.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The general life orientation is on being (vs. doing) and on the present (vs. future).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism, self-reliance and maintaining one’s personal space are important.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatalism, the belief that the future and health issues are more “in God’s hands”, is prevalent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diet tends to be higher in meat, grease/lard, sugar and sodium. There are many fried/breaded recipes and use of grease-based gravies.</td>
<td>Nutritional/Dietary Preferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children may eat more snack type foods and diet may be deficient in vitamin A, iron and calcium.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher risk for hypertension.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher use of tobacco (chew and smoke).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons may be less precise and more concrete in descriptions of issues. Explanations may be shorter and more direct (may be more emotionally reserved).</td>
<td>Communication Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be wary of “outsiders” or persons who appear to be authority figures, there can be a strong distrust of hierarchy/bureaucracy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalism and individualism are admired.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid jargon. More open-ended questions and personal interaction can help in getting accurate health information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women, particularly older females, may have more influence in health care matters. Men are more likely to view health issues as women’s concerns.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons often seek home remedies, consultation with family and possibly OTC or borrowed medications before turning to outside treatment.</td>
<td>Patient Care/Handling of Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be distrustful of doctors and the medical profession in general (hierarchy/bureaucracy) and may not seek outside treatment until symptoms are severe.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once seeking outside treatment persons may have higher expectations of immediate relief and/or cure. Lack of immediate response may be perceived as rejection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate family may play large role in patient follow-through and successful treatment and for this reason family should be included in patient health care education.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appalachian and urban Appalachians may have additional health care concerns due to working conditions (pollution, injury) as they are often employed in industrial and/or strenuous labor work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are generally no specific rules or taboos regarding blood transfusion, organ donation, or organ transplant. This may depend on specific religious customs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cremation or burial is generally acceptable depending on specific religious and/or family customs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Arab Muslim

- **Believe Allah (God) is all-powerful**
- **Health is influenced by God’s will**
- **Utmost modesty and sexual segregation are required**
- **Forbidden to eat pork**
- **May refuse to eat other meats for religious reasons and request vegetarian diet**
- **Dates are generally a popular food, but high in potassium**
- **“Hot” foods are avoided during warm seasons; “cold” foods are avoided during cold seasons**
- **“Hot” foods: beef, potatoes, most protein-rich foods**
- **“Cold” foods: chicken/fish, fruit, beer**
- **Fasting during Ramadan from approximately an hour before sunrise**
- **Potentially exempt from fasting are pregnant, lactating, or menstruating women, the sick, and travelers**
- **If a person misses the fast, he makes up for it when he is able**
- **Direct eye contact between a male and a female may be interpreted as an invitation of a sexual nature instead of as directness**
- **Men may have little respect for the female nurse or physician because duties of these professions require that the woman look at and touch the bodies of naked strangers which violates the laws of the Koran**
- **Don’t shake hands or hug patients, unless the patient initiates it (this is especially true for patients of the opposite sex)**
- **No eating or talking is allowed during prayers, and it is a sign of disrespect to walk in front of a person who is praying**
- **Same-sex nurses and physicians should care for Arab patients if at all possible**
- **May feel uncomfortable when alone with a physician of the opposite gender. If that’s unavoidable, leave the door or privacy curtain open (as long as your patient is dressed)**
- **Don’t be surprised if a husband asks to stay with his wife during a physical exam**
- **Permitted contraception methods should cause no harm and be reversible, so prophylactics, withdrawal methods, and oral contraceptives are allowed; permanent measures such as tubal ligation and vasectomy are not allowed, nor are methods that can lead to abortion, such as the morning-after pill**
- **Abortion of a viable fetus, except under certain circumstances, is considered a serious crime, equivalent to murder - Muslims consider a fetus to be viable when “ensoulment”, or “full personhood”, takes place, 120 days after fertilization**
- **Soon after a baby is born, an iman, sheikh, or the baby’s father may be called upon to recite a prayer in each ear of the newborn, and the heads of the babies may be shaved about a week after birth**
- **Medical decision making typically involves the patient’s immediate family even when the patient is conscious and competent**
- **When the patient is a women, the issue is further complicated because of a belief that, among more conservative populations, women of any age cannot sign consent forms. Instead, they typically have a father, older brother, husband, or son sign their forms**
- **Arrange for a private room for your dying patient, if possible. For the patient in a coma, turn his face and right shoulder toward Mecca**
- **After death, a member of the immediate family or a religious leader of the community will usually prepare the body; hospital personnel staff should simply cover the body with a sheet and handle it as little as possible, preferably only by a person of the same sex**
- **Female patients may wear an opaque black cape, or abaya, over their clothing and a head scarf, or hijab. Give patients ample time to cover their hair, arms, and legs after a knock on the exam door, even if they’re wearing a full-body gown. Consider posting a sign if possible. “Please knock before entering”**
- **Female patients will not be in the presence of a strange male without being fully dressed or covered**

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**Disclaimer:** The information in this guide is intended to provide awareness of cultural practices and beliefs. It is provided as a guide to alert you to some of the ways that culture impacts health care but may not necessarily apply to everyone who identifies with a particular group. It is not to be substituted with medical advice for any medical circumstances or condition and is not intended to be used for medical diagnosis or treatment. Contact your physician or healthcare provider for any health-related concerns.
## Argentinean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Beliefs &amp; Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 90% Catholic, some protestant and Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong belief in saints, purgatory, and heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is official separation of church and state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People from rural areas may be superstitious</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutritional Preferences and/or Dietary Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Emphasis on meat, especially beef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Homemde pasta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pastries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Local wines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mate (national beverage that is stimulating and strong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prefer black Columbian coffee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Language: Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Very expressive and talkative (extraverted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Direct and to the point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Decision making and discussion is generally slower than in the U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A man and woman do not customarily shake hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communication occurs at a closer distance, often with a hand on the other person's lapel or shoulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Placing hands on hips while speaking may be seen as rude or an attempt to intimidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Like personal and physical contact such as holding hands, hugging, and kissing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patient Care/Handling of Death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Eating is a private act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reluctant to get medical attention or accept new medical advancements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Often deny disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Believe in natural and holistic remedies (herbal teas, pure aloe, natural oils, and poultices)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Family gets involved with caring for the ill family member</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Asian

| Basic Beliefs & Practices |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| • More present oriented   |                 |
| • Many Asians may take a passive approach in the treatment of disease, due to the Buddhist influence that illness is justice for past transgressions and an inevitable part of life |
| • Some Asians believe that the body has many souls, and illness arises when one or more of the souls is missing (a condition known as “soul loss”) |
| • Diseases may be thought to be caused by shifts in environmental forces (like a “bad wind”) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutritional Preferences and/or Dietary Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Generally prefer warm or hot beverages to cold beverages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generally prefer cooked to raw vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other common foods for East and Southeast Asians include soybeans, pickled vegetables, noodle soup, and fish/shellfish/seafood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rice is the predominant carbohydrate staple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When animal meat is consumed by East &amp; Southeast Asians, almost every part of the animal is consumed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Filipinos and Vietnamese generally prefer rice with each meal or several times/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Usual diet is generally high in sodium, low in fat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Avoid eye contact and avoid hand gestures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Offer things several times; patients may refuse at first in order to be polite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Crossing one’s leg and pointing one’s feet in the direction of the patient are considered offensive by most Southeast Asians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To maintain a compliant attitude toward the physician, Asians may refrain from asking questions and may pretend to understand what physicians say even when they do not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Realize that since pronouns do not exist in most Asian languages, they will often confuse “he” or “she”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Avoid questions which requires “yes” or “no” response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have patient demonstrate understanding of any patient teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individuals are often expected to sacrifice personal needs for the good of the group, and these factors will be weighed in making decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If the patient is an Asian woman, the eldest male in the family may be the primary decision maker, rather than the patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Avoid touching the head without permission from the patient or parent especially among persons of Vietnamese background - if medical treatment requires touching the head or if the head is touched by accident, the health care worker should touch the opposite side of the head or the shoulder to prevent the escape of the soul and other vital forces from the head</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued on next page
Asian - continued from previous page

- To show respect, patient may agree to what the healthcare provider says, without have any intention of following through
- Coining & cupping are traditional medical practices in China, Korea, & Vietnam, not forms of abuse
- Fevers are usually treated by wrapping in warm blankets and drinking warm liquids
- Some Asian populations have long traditions of alcohol and drug abuse (including drugs that may be virtually unknown in the US) and may have varying perceptions of the harm/benefits of using these substances. Physicians should be explicit when discussing the risks with these patients
- Avoid giving ice water, unless requested
- Use of herbs is common
- Avoid the number “4”, it may signify death for Chinese & Japanese
- Certain traditional practices, like coin rubbing, cupping, or pinching, leave marks that lead physicians to mistakenly assume that self-abuse or child abuse is involved
- Mental illness is often highly stigmatized in most Asian countries. Patients with emotional problems are likely to somatize them and present with physical complaints. Patients may be reluctant to discuss emotional problems with strangers
- The family may decide not to allow the patient to be told "bad news", as they may believe that the mention of death or a terminal condition is seen as a curse that only speeds up the process of death. Ask the patient to whom
- Asian patients often try to exert control over their illness by regulating the dosage of herbs, even when on a treatment plan based of Western medicine (possibly due to lack of understanding of Western drugs)
- Many Southeast Asians may resist consenting to surgery, if they are concerned about the loss of blood disrupting the body's balance and causing a "soul loss". Physicians may want to work with traditional healers, clergy, and/or family to assure patients that surgery will not result in "soul loss" and to explain that the blood can be replenished after surgery
- Vietnamese and Korean clients may be highly distressed or refuse to have blood drawn for lab tests
- For some Asian patients it is important to die at home, rather than in a hospital. A referral to a hospice program may help in resolving these issues
- A do-not-resuscitate (DNR) order goes against the value of longevity and may offend an Asian patient's children, since their loyalty dictates that they do whatever it takes to sustain the life of their parent
- Acupuncture is a common treatment of illness
- Caregivers may want to consult traditional healers, or support the patient's choice to do so, in addition to prescribing Western forms of treatment, in an effort to provide a holistic approach to treatment
- Because herbal medicine is widely practiced, caregivers need to ask Asian patients about medical practices in addition to asking about medications - assess the patient's use of traditional medicines and their contra-indications with Western medicines
- Family members may want to bring food for the patient's meal
### Australians

**Extended family structure**
- Community elders generally have a high status and may be a rich resource for information

**Basic Beliefs & Practices**
- Generally English speakers or bilingual
- Should be simple, clear and concise
- Generally reserved with strangers, though some patients may become vocal if they feel defensive
- Attitude to eye contact is variable, follow the lead shown by the patient on this issue
- Building trust with the client is important and may take time
- Ask patient how they wish to be addressed
- May be reluctant to disagree openly
- Silence is valued as an element of communication, a health professional should allow silence within the consultation in order for their patients to consider the implications of the conversation
- Will often present for medical care when their illness has significantly progressed or when they have multiple complaints
- Have a high tolerance to pain
- There is significant orientation to symptoms
- It is important to explain the importance of completing medication
- Medications may be shared within the community
- If hospitalization is required, patients may wish to receive as many visitors as possible
- Keeping appointments may be a problem

**Communication Awareness**

**Patient Care/Handling of Death**
- Have a high tolerance to pain
- There is significant orientation to symptoms
- It is important to explain the importance of completing medication
- Medications may be shared within the community
- If hospitalization is required, patients may wish to receive as many visitors as possible
- Keeping appointments may be a problem

### Bosnian Community

**Religion:** Muslim, Catholic, Orthodox Christian

**Nutritional Preferences and/or Dietary Requirements**
- Beans and rice are staple
- Feijoada-black beans
- Beef
- Prot
- Churrasco (charcoal-broiled meats)
- Manioc (vegetable)
- Tropical fruits

**Communication Awareness**

**Patient Care/Handling of Death**
- Health care in Bosnia is socialized - greater emphasis on primary care
- Strong familiarity with Western conceptions of chronic diseases and treatments
- Herbal remedies may be used concurrently with Western medicine
- There is a growing acceptance of alternative medicine
- Some believe in herb treatment, teas, and balms
- Preference for same-sex physicians for pelvic and breast examination
- It is important that explanations extend to both the patient and their relatives
- Tend to trust medical personnel
- Place great faith in doctors and nurses

### Brazilian

**Basic Beliefs & Practices**
- The primary religion is Roman Catholicism with growing Evangelical representation

**Nutritional Preferences and/or Dietary Requirements**
- Language: Portuguese (about 50 different dialects)
- The communication style is generally formal: use titles
- Eye contact is valued
- Emphasis on family unity
- Touching is appropriate
- Very sociable
- Will stand close to each other
- Social kissing (i.e. when greeting or leaving family and friends)
- Hugging & touching are appropriate

**Communication Awareness**

**Patient Care/Handling of Death**
- Traditional remedies are widely used in rural areas in Brazil
- There is a growing acceptance of alternative medicine
- Some believe in herb treatment, teas, and balms
- Preference for same-sex physicians for pelvic and breast examination
- It is important that explanations extend to both the patient and their relatives
- Tend to trust medical personnel
- Place great faith in doctors and nurses
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Cambodian</strong></th>
<th><strong>Basic Beliefs &amp; Practices</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theravada Buddhism is the primary religion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity and Animism are also present</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong family identity, respect for ancestors and the past</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriarchal social structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language: Khmer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using a patient’s title is important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value smooth interpersonal relationships and are often non-confrontational in disagreement; disagreement may be articulated in the form of noncompliance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touching another person’s head is considered an insult</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older people should be greeted first and last</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is inappropriate to maintain eye contact with someone is older</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pointing feet at someone is considered an insult</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Though males are dominant in the family, mothers usually make the health care decisions for their children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementing children can bring bad luck (the “evil eye”)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When walking in front of someone other than children it is customary to bend slightly from the waist as a sign of respect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stoicism is highly valued</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Western procedures (blood draws, surgery, x-rays)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients may be used to managing illness through self-medication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May expect to receive medications for every illness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medications are only taken for as long as symptoms persist and are often shared among family members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer same-sex physicians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women may avoid pelvic and breast examinations because of modesty</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Canadian</strong></th>
<th><strong>Basic Beliefs &amp; Practices</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparable to American diet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French influence in Montreal and Quebec</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer no touching or kissing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take things at face value</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow nurses’ instructions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accustomed to socialized medicine, less litigation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take physicians at their word</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to wait for treatment</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Cayman</strong></th>
<th><strong>Basic Beliefs &amp; Practices</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People are very religious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority of the island is Baptist or “Church of God”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voodoo and psychics are outlawed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turtle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantains</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fried food very rich in fat, cooked or fried in coconut oil or milk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language: English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like to be acknowledged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good eye contact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer no touching or kissing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very talkative and known for their friendliness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone on the island knows each other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like to be told what is going on by doctor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would rather talk to doctors than nurses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer one-on-one care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chinese

Basic Beliefs & Practices

- Religious: Taoism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. Confucianism, a philosophy, is also prevalent.
- Harmonious relationship with nature and others
- Loyalty to family, friends, and government. Family is the major unit of society – provides support, validation and stability.
- May use indigenous healing practices – herbal medicine, acupuncture, therapeutic massage, tai chi, chi gong (the last two being physical exercises) are some examples.
- Values harmony and interdependence in relationships, respect for one's place in the line of generations.
- Concept of family includes ancestors and all their descendants. (different sense of time than what is held in the West)
- Public debate of conflicting views is unacceptable
- Accommodating not confrontational
- Modesty, self-control, self-reliance, and self-restraint
- Hierarchical structure for interpersonal and family interactions
- Devotion to traditions
- Nutrition is also a means to restore health. Chinese traditional medicine categorizes food into five groups: hot, cold, allergic, moderate and nutrient. Belief in “Chi” (energy) and balance of “yin” (cold) and “yang” (hot) foods. Out of balance when there is illness.
- No food with “yin” after surgery (e.g., cold desserts, salad)
- Often lactose intolerant
- Soy sauce, MSG, and preserved food can be prepared in various ways
- Organic beef, yak
- Alcohol may cause flushing

Nutritional Preferences and/or Dietary Requirements

- Language: Mandarin, Cantonese, Malaysia, Hokkein, Hakka, Teo-chieu
- Many spoken dialects but one common written language
- Quiet, polite, and assertive
- As there are significant concerns about maintaining harmony and saving face there is a more indirect approach to communication.
- Suppress feelings of anxiety, fear, depression, and pain
- Worry about disharmony and may somatize under stress and seek out medical versus mental health.
- The term “neurasthenia” is an official diagnosis and China (symptoms of exhaustion, weakness, dizziness, diffuse bodily complaints, difficulty with sleep, appetite) most related to the Western definition of major depression.
- With Chinese Americans there tends to be a higher suicide rates than European Americans.
- Culture bound syndromes include suk-yeoung (genital retraction disorder) and amok.
- Emphasizing acceptance without questioning or talking back
- Communications are dependent on the level of acculturation. Immigrant or first generation families are more likely to be patriarchal and hierarchical with more information being directed at the family head – often expecting a provider to behave in a more authoritative manner. Later “Americanized” generations are often less observant of hierarchical concerns.
- Women uncomfortable with exams by male physicians
- Congee is a rice porridge given to the sick
- May not adhere to fixed schedule
- May fear medical institutions
- A person is not told of a terminal illness because the family does not want to upset that person or make the situation worse
- Use a combination of herbal and Western medication at the same time
- Traditional: acupuncture, moxibustion, herbal medicine, massage, skin scrapping, and cupping
- Use a combination of herbal and Western medication at the same time
### Croats

- **Basic Beliefs & Practices**
  - Roman Catholicism is the primary religion
  - Elders are highly respected
  - Patriarchal social structure, though parents may live with their adult children
  - The nuclear family is the primary social structure, though parents may live with their adult children
  - Language: Croatian
  - Use titles with older migrants
  - Eye contact is highly valued
  - Touching hands, forehead, and shoulder is appropriate

- **Communication Awareness**
  - Doctors have high status
  - Recent immigrants may become easily angered due to stress; health professionals should allow patients to express the issues and try to work with what they are given
  - Those with terminal illness may prefer not to know that their exact prognosis; this issue should be discussed with your patient prior to diagnosis
  - There is strong preference for receiving medication for pain
  - Side effects should be carefully explained
  - Same-sex physicians preferred, particularly for gynecological examinations
  - There is a cultural taboo against pelvic and breast examinations, particularly for older migrants
  - Breastfeeding may need to be encouraged

- **Patient Care/Handling of Death**
  - Sick people tend to take on a passive and dependent role
  - The extended family supports the immediate family
  - It is an insult to the patient if there is not a large family/friend presence
  - Express pain openly
  - Traditional/spiritual practices are practiced concurrently with biomedical methods
  - Physicians have a high status - the Cuban client may assume that the doctor will take a directive role
  - Health decisions may be made in consultation with family members; ask your client how they wish to approach diagnosis/prognosis
  - Elderly cared for at home

### Cuban

- **Basic Beliefs & Practices**
  - Roman Catholicism is the major religion (Protestant minority)
  - Patriarchal social structure
  - While the extended family is valued, the nuclear family is the basic unit of social structure
  - Santeria, which include animal sacrifice

- **Nutritional Preferences and/or Dietary Requirements**
  - Meat is a valued part of the Cuban diet; accessibility may lead to overconsumption
  - Cuban bread
  - Café con leche
  - Cuban coffee
  - Toast port
  - Black beans
  - Rice
  - Plantains
  - Yucca
  - Chicken

- **Communication Awareness**
  - Language; Spanish
  - Some have a tendency to be loud when having a discussion
  - Animated communication style; Cubans express themselves in a way that may seem demanding to others
  - Communication is generally warm and affectionate
  - Use their hands for emphasis and credibility
  - Prefer strong eye contact

- **Patient Care/Handling of Death**
  - Culture requires visiting the sick
  - Sick people tend to take on a passive and dependent role
  - The extended family supports the immediate family
  - It is an insult to the patient if there is not a large family/friend presence
  - Express pain openly
  - Traditional/spiritual practices are practiced concurrently with biomedical methods
  - Physicians have a high status - the Cuban client may assume that the doctor will take a directive role
  - Health decisions may be made in consultation with family members; ask your client how they wish to approach diagnosis/prognosis
  - Elderly cared for at home
### Cypriot Community

- The elderly are held in high esteem in the community and as such are treated with dignity and respect
- Predominantly Greek Orthodox
- Patriarchal social structure
- Extended family structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language: Cypriot, Greek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is important to maintain eye contact with someone who is older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to use titles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touching is not appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older migrants may have little understanding of English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Health professionals are accorded a high status
- Religious rituals, last rites and communion
- Many of the older generation prefer to die at home (where possible)
- It is usual for the family to be with the person who is dying
- There is a strong orientations to symptoms
- There is high degree of fear associated with cancer, families may prefer not to tell the patient, this is an issue that should be discussed with patient and their family
- The elderly prefer to be cared for at home and supported by their family
- A small number of Cypriot migrants continue to practice cupping
- There is a general lack of understanding of mental health
- Confidentiality is extremely important
- There is a preference for same-sex physicians, particularly for gynecological examinations
- It can be inappropriate and embarrassing for older women to discuss women’s health issues especially with male medical practitioners

### Dutch Community

- Religions: Catholic, Protestant, Calvinist
- Family structure is organized around the nuclear family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language: Dutch</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western communication style - assertive and direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye contact is valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to use titles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touching is appropriate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Considerable use of traditional herbs and homeopathic medicine
- No particular preference for same-sex physician
- No cultural taboos on pelvic/breast examinations

### East Indians (India)

- Pregnant Hindu women are often encouraged to eat nuts, raisins, coconuts and fruits to have a healthy, beautiful baby
- Many Indians, but not all, are vegetarians due to a Hindu belief system
- Indian foods is noted for its curries, mixtures of spices such as tarragon, cumin, fenugreek, tumeric, cloves, and cinnamon
- Dried ginger powder, celery seeds, nuts and puffed lotus seeds my be given to the new Hindu mother to cleanse her system and restore her strength
- Hindus will generally not eat meat or fish; some may not eat eggs. Muslims will not eat pork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutritional Preferences and/or Dietary Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct eye contact may be seen as rude or disrespectful, especially among the elderly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silence often indicates acceptance or approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A side-to-side head bob may indicate agreement or uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An up-and-down nod may indicate disagreement but acknowledgment of what the speaker is saying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males should avoid shaking hands with females unless she offers her hand first</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Some may not want to sign consents; they consider health care professionals to be the authorities, and prefer to have them make the decisions
- Husbands may answer questions addressed to wife
- Close female family members will often remain with patient
- Family members will often take over ADLs (Activities of Daily Living, such as feeding, grooming, etc.) for patient
- The father or eldest son usually has decision-making power, but generally family members are consulted before decisions are made
- May prefer same-sex caregivers due to modesty
- Generally stoic
- Muslim patients may not want narcotics for anything other than severe pain
### East Timorese Community

- The primary religion is Roman Catholicism
- New mothers will prefer to drink hot water, in order to encourage the production of breast milk
- Language: Portuguese
  - The communication style is generally quite formal: use titles
  - Eye contact is not highly valued and may be inappropriate in some instances
  - Touching is appropriate

- It is important that explanations extend to both the patient and their relatives
- It is generally considered inappropriate to inform a patient of a terminal prognosis, this issue should be discussed with your patient prior to diagnosis if possible
- Health professionals have a high status
- Preference for same-sex physicians
- There is a cultural taboo against pelvic and breast examinations
- Relatives of patients will want to visit and stay for as long as possible

### Ecuadorian

- Primarily Catholic
- Increase in Protestant, Baptist, and Jehovah Witness
- Very respectful towards religious leaders
- Small percentage of population is wealthy with much political control
- Family size is usually large

- Diet high in fruits and proteins
  - Starches - rice, potatoes, and corn
  - Food is prepared fresh daily, usually with salsa
  - Coastal diet: rice and fish (ceviche)
  - Drink beer and soda

- Language: Spanish, Quechua-Indian
  - Extremely polite
  - Reserved
  - Respectful
  - Especially helpful

- Prefer pampering an ill family member
- Stay overnight with patient
- Not stoic when it comes to pain
- Very private and modest
- Embarrassed if they do not look their best
- Extremely protective of family
- Often parents live with grown children

### Egyptians

- Islam is the primary religion
- Coptic Christianity is the minority religion
- Patriarchal social structure

- Language: Arabic and English
  - Expressive communication style
  - Eye contact is valued as a sign of respect to the speaker
  - Title are important
  - Approach the authority of health professional with respect and appreciation, there may be reluctance to express disagreement
  - Touching is appropriate between people of the same gender
  - Elders are highly respected
  - Patients are considered feeble, so there is an expectation that they will be shown affection, concern and sympathy by nurses and doctors

- There is a cultural reluctance to inform patients of their prognosis
  - It may be appropriate to inform the religious leader of an impending death
  - Express pain openly
  - There is a tendency to self medicate before seeking professional help
  - Medication is highly valued
  - Herbal remedies may be used in conjunction with biomedical processes
  - There is a preference for same-sex physicians especially for gynecological examinations
### Eritreans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Beliefs &amp; Practices</th>
<th>Nutritional/Dietary Preferences</th>
<th>Communication Awareness</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coptic Christianity and Islam are the primary religions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Coptic Christians only eat meat and dairy products for half of the year</strong></td>
<td><strong>Language:</strong> Tigrinya is the national language</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Language:</strong> Tigrinya is the national language</td>
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<td><strong>May consider it uncaring for physician to tell a patient they are terminally ill--usually prefer that the physician tell the patient's family instead</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The family may make health decisions collectively</strong></td>
<td><strong>Eye contact is valued</strong></td>
<td><strong>May expect the physician to direct their health management</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hospitalized patients tend to take a passive role</strong></td>
<td><strong>Other major languages, Amharic and Oromigna</strong></td>
<td><strong>Herbal medicine is highly developed</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spiritual remedies include amulets and rituals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Eye contact is valued</strong></td>
<td><strong>Spiritual remedies include amulets and rituals</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medications are highly valued; injections are thought to be more powerful than oral medications</strong></td>
<td><strong>Eye contact is valued</strong></td>
<td><strong>Spiritual remedies include amulets and rituals</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prefer same-sex physician</strong></td>
<td><strong>Eye contact is valued</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Female circumcision is practiced</strong></td>
<td><strong>Eye contact is valued</strong></td>
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### Ethiopians

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<tr>
<td><strong>Amharic is the national language</strong></td>
<td><strong>Prefer for strict sanitation measures when preparing food</strong></td>
<td><strong>Other major languages, Amharic and Oromigna</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>May consider it uncaring for physician to tell a patient they are terminally ill--usually prefer that the physician tell the patient's family instead</strong></td>
<td><strong>Eye contact is valued, particularly between men, though eye contact between men and women may be inappropriate</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Little emotion or affect shown to strangers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Elders are given significant respect</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>It is culturally inappropriate to convey 'bad news' directly; it is thought better to give patients hope</strong></td>
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<td><strong>The family may make health decisions collectively</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Terminal illness and patient care related to it are not discussed with the patient but a close relative</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Problems with one's spirit may be seen as the primary cause of physical or mental illness</strong></td>
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### Filipino (Philippines)

- Catholicism is the primary religion
- Seek both faith healer and Western physician when ill
- Overheating is thought to cause fevers, and rising vapors from soil is believed to produce rheumatism
- Belief that many diseases are the will of God
- Certain foods in Philippines are traditionally eaten hot or cold, e.g., milk is only taken hot
- Rice is the primary staple
- Dietary preferences are influenced by both Spanish and Chinese cultures
- Generally consume more animal meat and fat than other Asian subgroups
- Fish, rice, vegetables, and fruit
- Meals have to be HOT
- Languages: English, Spanish, and Tagalog (Tagalog is the national language)
- Value and respect elders
- Loving and family-oriented
- Set aside time just for family
- It is not acceptable to show anger in public
- It is considered impolite to stare or look directly at the people with whom you are talking
- May be hesitant to challenge doctors
- Tendency not to answer questions unless obviously relevant
- Physicians are highly respected
- Family decision important
- Ignore health-related issues, often noncompliant
- Have expressed concern that doctors do not give them enough information
- In contrast to Western medicine, they often leave thing in the hands of God, with occasional folk medicine
- Western medicine may be used concurrently with traditional, herbal and religious healing practices
- Home remedies: herbal tea, massage, and sleep
- Poor understanding of preventative health; may consider themselves healthy as long as they are able to conduct a normal life
- May subscribe to supernatural cause of disease
- Rural Filipinos may shun exposure of bodily orifices for fear that undesired winds might enter the body

### Greek

- Predominately Greek Orthodox
- Patriarchal
- Elders have a high status and should be treated with respect
- Language: Greek
- Expressive communications style - Physical contact is both natural and normal but is generally restricted to the patient's family/community
- It is important to communicate with the family, as they are likely to be essential to any treatment program
- A small number of Greek migrants continue to practice cupping
- Preference for home treatment
- It is seen as inappropriate to have men and women in the same room when being admitted to the hospital
- There is high degree of fear associated with cancer, families prefer not to tell the patient
- It can be inappropriate and embarrassing for older women to discuss women's health issues especially with male medical practitioners

### Guatemalan

- Primarily Catholic
- Increase in Protestants
- Very respectful toward elders
- Mayan heritage: European influence: strong family ties
- Diet high in fruits, vegetables, rice, beans, and tortillas (corn flour bread)
- Language: Spanish
- Quiet
- Reserved
- Respectful
- Will not question for fear of insulting professional
- Modest
- Private
- Stoic
- Believe in alternative methods of healing

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Disclaimer: The information in this guide is intended to provide awareness of cultural practices and beliefs. It is provided as a guide to alert you to some of the ways that culture impacts health care but may not necessarily apply to everyone who identifies with a particular group. It is not to be substituted with medical advice for any medical circumstances or condition and is not intended to be used for medical diagnosis or treatment. Contact your physician or healthcare provider for any health-related concerns.
### Haitian Refugees/Immigrants

- 80% Roman Catholic, and some Protestant
- Extended family is the ideal social unit
- Religious beliefs and/or voodoo divide illness into natural and supernatural causes, where supernatural indicates the presence of an evil spirit for which voodoo intervention may be sought/requested
- Illness may be seen as related to a spell of grief, anger, or fear which may reduce the quality of the patient's blood
- Belief that blood plays a central role in illness
- Patriarchal social structure
- Large social gap exists between wealthy and poor citizens
- Significant voodoo influences

### Basic Beliefs & Practices

- Large breakfast and lunch
- Tend to like vegetables overcooked
- Extensive use of frying
- Low consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables
- Commonly consume more eggs, sweets, and salty snacks
- Those who do consume milk often prefer whole milk
- High fat meats are preferred, such as pork, lunch meats, and organ meats
- The fat drippings that remain after meat preparation are often recycled as gravy
- Light dinner
- Rice, pork, grillot, and red beans
- Herbs and clover

### Nutritional Preferences and/or Dietary Requirements

- Language: French is the official language, and is taught in schools, but the majority of Haitians refugees and immigrants speak only Creole
- Dreams are important events that allow an individual to communicate with deceased relatives, and patients may rely on these dreams to interpret their illness
- May refer to illness as “battement de Coeur” (means “heartbeat” in French)
- Personal fortitude is valued by Haitians, and illness is shared only with family and close friends. Public displays of weakness are discouraged
- Patients may choose not to share their folk remedies out of fear or embarrassment so physicians should be non-judgmental in discussing these coping mechanisms
- A patient may appreciate the chance to share how he/she thinks the illness should be treated
- Eye contact is valued
- Address your patient by his or her surname, unless instructed otherwise by the patient, especially if you introduce yourself by your surname and title
- Parental authority is respected without question, even into adulthood, so parents may make health care decisions
- Use proverbs or sayings to describe situations
- Expressive communication style, though may be quiet and polite
- Use arm and hand movements to expand their words
- Personal physical space is not highly valued in Haitian culture
- Touching is considered appropriate

### Patient Care/Handling of Death

- Use biomedical, traditional, and spiritual methods to approach illness
- Combining folk remedies and biomedical therapies may increase the likelihood of compliance (fitting the treatment into a traditional cultural context), and folk remedies usually do not interfere with medical treatment, except in certain cases (asking what other treatments/therapies/remedies the patient has tried may help to avoid hazardous drug interactions)
- May be suspicious of blood tests, fearing that losing blood will make them weak, that the blood could be used for voodoo purposes, or that the doctor could sell the blood for profit
- Obedient to doctor and nurse, and hesitant to ask questions
- May view use of oxygen as indication of severe illness
- Occasionally share prescriptions and home remedies
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutritional Preferences and/or Dietary Requirements</th>
<th>Communication Awareness</th>
<th>Patient Care/Handling of Death</th>
<th>Basic Beliefs/Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May refuse certain foods or medications that upset hot/cold body balance; offer alternative foods &amp; liquids</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoid ice water, unless requested</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ask about the patient’s family and interests before focusing on health issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Realize that they may be reluctant to discuss emotional problems outside the family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patients may tend to be expressive (loud)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some may believe that complimenting a child without touching the child can cause evil eye; to be safe, touch the child when admiring him/her</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow family members to express their love and concern by spending as much time with the patient as possible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modesty may be important, especially among older women, try to keep the covered whenever possible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Many have a present time orientation, which may impede use of preventive medicine and follow-up care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Since family members may want to withhold a fatal diagnosis from the patient, ask patient upon admission who should be given information about his/her condition</td>
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<tr>
<td>May wish to return home to die to facilitate the process of reincarnation</td>
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<tr>
<td>May use traditional practices concurrently with biomedical treatments</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong preference for same-sex physicians</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional belief structures - animism, ancestral worship and reincarnation</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Patrilineal social structure</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hmong language - composed of three dialects (green, blue, or white) which have different levels of intelligibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decision-making regarding health care involves many members of the family, particularly elders (more egalitarian than other Asian subgroups)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The primary religion is Roman Catholicism</td>
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<tr>
<td>The conventional family structure is the nuclear family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Language: Hungarian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Expressive communication style</td>
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<td>Eye contact is valued</td>
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<tr>
<td>Touching is generally appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of titles is important, particularly with older patients</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to have relatives around the dying person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health professionals are highly respected</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment is often not considered complete without medication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preference for the same-sex physicians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Islam is their primary religion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marriages tend to be early - as young as 12 years of age</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is a cultural preference for first cousin marriage</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is considered inappropriate for men and women to shake hands</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male circumcision is the norm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most associated with Catholicism in the United States due to immigration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Often assume that anything that goes wrong is the result of their sins. Suffering is deserved and not much change is possible.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be charming, using humor, verbal word play and obfuscation often to avoid discussion.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues are a private matter and they often do not seek or expect any help when there is trouble. Prefer to withdraw and suffer alone.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show minimization and inaccuracy in describing their pain as well as having a high pain tolerance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They may be less likely to seek medical help and have difficulties in communicating about illness.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be less likely to ask questions or request further information.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be more open with strangers than with family.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females often tend to be more independent, self-sufficient, not wanting to ask for help.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have strong concerns for others’ boundaries, respect for other’s privacy and make purposeful efforts to avoid intruding.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death is considered the most important life cycle transition. Death brings a better afterlife (end suffering).</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Italian

- The primary religion is Roman Catholicism
- Values revolve around protecting the family (versus individual) and this includes extended family and old family friends. Family is the ideal and provides a strong sense of security and identity for many Italians.
- Pride is in resilience and the ability to cope with difficult situations.
- Focus on the present – family, festivals, food.
- The Individual and/or economic advancement are not particularly compatible with core values.
- The extended family structure is the norm
- Drinks are not usually served with ice because icy things may be considered unhealthy

Nutritional Preferences

- Language: Italian, and several local dialects
- Communications tends to be animated and expressive
- Conversation takes place at a closer distance than many cultures
- Loud talking may be used for emphasis and does not denote anger or disagreement
- Words are not always meant literally. They are used to give expression to the moment and can be exaggerated to elaborate the emotional sensations.
- Tend to somatize and have much concern about the connections between their emotional and physical well-being.
- Italians tend to have a lower pain threshold than other groups.
- While they may appear to be open and direct there is a tendency to deny more difficult problems by sidestepping.
- Physical contact is considered both natural and normal
- It is conventional to use titles, particularly with older Italians
- Will tend to expect to be listened to as an equal when discussing treatment
- Italian families may prefer to dress their relatives before the body is taken from the hospital
- Nudity is accepted
- Due to lack of bilingual counselors, many Italian migrants may only have been treated with medication; practitioners may find it difficult to encourage other forms of treatment

Jamaican

- Christian beliefs dominate (Catholic, Baptist, and Anglican)
- Some Rastafarian influence
- Rasta (means way or path) – focus on one’s individual path and on “naturality” (involved with and in tune with one’s natural, individual surroundings).
- Beef, goat, rice and peas, and lots of spices
- Warm foods and medications may be preferred to cold
- Some avoid eating pork and pork products because of religious beliefs
- Rastas eat limited types of meat in accordance with the dietary Laws of the Old Testament, they do not eat seafood or pig. Others abstain from all meat, maintaining a vegan diet.
- Language: Patois (broken English)
- Respect for elders is encouraged
- Reserved
- Avoid hugging and showing affection in public
- Curious and tend to ask a lot of questions
- Will try some home remedies before seeking medical help
- Like to be completely informed before procedures
- Emotions, harmony, and balance in life may play an important role in treatment
- Respectful of doctor's opinion
- Can be reluctant to admit that they are in pain
- May not adhere to a fixed schedule
### Japanese

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Beliefs &amp; Practices</th>
<th>Nutritional Preferences and/or Dietary Requirements</th>
<th>Communication Awareness</th>
<th>Patient Care/Handling of Death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Family is extremely important</td>
<td>- Shintoism and Buddhism are the most common religions</td>
<td>- Food presentation is important</td>
<td>- Fish and soybean are main sources of protein, as well as meats and vegetables (some pickled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Rice and noodles; tea; soy sauce</td>
<td>- Often lactose-intolerant</td>
<td>- Alcohol may cause flushing</td>
<td>- Older persons avoid some food combinations (e.g. milk and cherries, watermelon and crab)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Behavior and communication are defined by role and status</td>
<td>- Use attitude, actions, and feelings to communicate</td>
<td>- Openness considered a sign of immaturity, lack of self control</td>
<td>- The U.S. &quot;OK&quot; gesture means money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Talkative people are considered showoffs or insincere</td>
<td>- Implicit nonverbal messages are of central importance</td>
<td>- Insulted when addressed by first name</td>
<td>- Pointing with less than the whole hand is impolite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Confidentiality is very important for honor</td>
<td>- Tendency to control anger</td>
<td>- Family role for support is important</td>
<td>- Disease is seen as an imbalance or disharmony; balance is brought through harmony of hot and cold, and energy flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Silence is valued</td>
<td>- Use concept of hierarchy and status</td>
<td>- Speak little during meal</td>
<td>- Prone to keloid formation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Avoid eye contact and touch</td>
<td>- High fiber, spicy seasoning, rice, Kim Chee (fermented cabbage)</td>
<td>- Often lactose- and alcohol-intolerant</td>
<td>- Cleft lip or palate not uncommon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Korean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Patient Care/Handling of Death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Family-oriented</td>
<td>- Believe in reincarnation</td>
<td>- Decisions tend to be by group and the oldest being given the greatest authority</td>
<td>- High fiber, spicy seasoning, rice, Kim Chee (fermented cabbage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Religious beliefs</td>
<td>- Religions include Shamanism, Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity</td>
<td>- Belief in balance of two forces: hot and cold</td>
<td>- Speak little during meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Personal space is valued</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Often lactose- and alcohol-intolerant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Rephrasing and inquiring if more information is needed is more appropriate because it is an embarassment to admit misunderstanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Family needs to be included in plan of care</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Kosovar Refugees

- Religion: Islam, Orthodox Christianity, Roman Catholicism
- The extended family network is important to Kosovars
- Women have high status
- About 90% of Kosovars speak Albanian
- High rates of cholera, poliomyelitis, meningitis
- Maternal mortality among Kosovars is the highest in Europe

### Kurdish Refugees

- Islam is the primary religion
- There are two dialects in the Kurdish language - Sorani and Kurmanji
- Eye contact is appropriate
- Handshakes between the sexes are (usually) appropriate between the sexes
- A two-handed handshake is considered especially warm and polite, it is inappropriate for a man to shake the hand of an elderly woman
- Elders are accorded great respect
- Death and dying - there is a Kurdish tradition that the family gathers around their dying parent to ask for forgiveness
- Abortion is traditionally considered an extreme violation of Kurdish and Islamic culture
- Husbands frequently accompany their wives into the delivery room

### Lao Community

- Buddhist and animist belief play an important part in health practice
- Traditionally patriarchal
- The extended family is valued
- Lao/Laoitan is the official language
- Relationship may take a while to build
- Trust is an essential element in relationships
- Women may not be comfortable shaking hands with men
- Touching another person’s head is considered an insult
- Traditional medicine may be used concurrently with western medicine
- Strong orientation to symptoms
- Need to explain procedures and medicines to patients
- There is a strong preference same-sex physicians, particularly for pelvic and breast examinations

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**Latin Americans**

- **Basic Beliefs & Practices**
  - Largely Roman Catholic
  - Folk concepts lead Latinos to believe that illness is caused by negative emotional states, dislocation or malfunction of organs or body parts, infant susceptibility, or magical causes
  - Believe that individuals can do little to alter fate or the "will of God"
  - Extended family is important
  - Traditionally patriarchal

- **Nutritional Preferences and/or Dietary Requirements**
  - Vegetable protein sources are emphasized rather than animal protein sources, such as corn and beans
  - The mid-day meal is the heaviest
  - Food is generally prepared using animal fats (i.e. lards, cheeses, and creams)
  - Less milk and dairy are consumed than in the US population
  - Stews and mixed meat/vegetable dishes are common

- **Language:** Spanish, Portuguese, French
  - Naming conventions, use patient's title
  - There is a strong value placed on conspicuous politeness and pleasantness, and avoiding hostile confrontation
  - A neutral attitude from a physician may be viewed as negative
  - Use Señor (Mr.), Señora (Mrs.), and Señorita (Miss) as titles
  - Latinos may perceive health care providers to be detached if they stand or sit two feet away from their patients
  - Be as thorough as possible in explanations as Latino patients may avoid asking questions to avoid the perception of disagreement
  - Try to greet the Latino patient in Spanish if you can
  - A nod of the head in response to physician instructions may indicate respect, not agreement
  - They expect a warm personal relationship with their physicians, and want to know that the provider is concerned about them
  - A handshake, a hand on the shoulder, and even hugging in some circumstances might be expected
  - Eye contact is valued
  - Touching is considered appropriate

- **Patient Care/Handling of Death**
  - Folk medical treatments are usually harmless, with some exceptions, and may vary across Latino subcultures, even for the same disorder
  - This population often uses Mexican border pharmacies to obtain drugs, which can be dangerous, especially if the drugs are banned in the US
  - Since many Latinos believe that the life force dwells in the heart, the concept of "brain death" may be difficult to understand and accept
  - Folk treatments involve a variety of rituals based on purification, social reintegration, and penance
  - Strong extended family support systems exist and should be enlisted in the care of Latino patients
  - An appropriate response to a fatalistic belief may be "Perhaps God doesn't want you to get sick and die yet" or highlight the value around family by urging the patient to take care of himself/herself and be around for the family
  - Doctors have a high status
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  - Infusions and herb teas important
  - Women prefer a female doctor for gynecological problems

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### Macedonians

- Older people are highly respected
- The primary religion is Orthodox Christianity
- Extended families are the norm
- Patriarchal social structure but women are included in decision making
- Sons are often encouraged to live with their parents after marriage

| Language: Macedonian  
| Older people may be called “Aunt” or “Uncle”  
| Eye contact is highly valued, seen as sign that the listener is paying attention  
| Use titles  
| Handshakes are an appropriate form of greeting for both men and women |

- Doctors are highly respected
- The presence of family is important
- It is conventional to take an optimistic approach by offering examples for others who have survived similar situations
- Traditional remedies: faith healers, sugar water, camomile tea, plum brandy for fever
- There is common expectation that medication should be prescribed for each complaint
- There is a tendency to share medication
- Preference for same sex practitioners for breast and cervical examinations
- There is a traditional belief that if a pregnant woman sees someone eating she must be offered some of the food; the result of not following this convention is thought to be miscarriage

### Maltese Community

- Roman Catholicism is the primary religion
- Extended family structure
- Patriarchal family roles
- Elders have a high status

| Language: Maltese, English  
| Expressive communication style  
| Eye contact is valued as seen as sign of honesty  
| It is important to use a patient’s title  
| Will generally be prepared to disagree  
| Respect is an important cultural value  
| Touching is appropriate |

- Health professionals are held in high esteem
- When dying, it may be appropriate to call the patient’s priest for the Last Rites
- Family may want to be present if someone is dying
- Stoicism in the face of pain is valued for older people
- There is an orientation to symptoms, so patients may stop taking medicine when symptoms disappear
- There is a tendency to share medication between friends and family members
- Diabetes is a concern
- Herbal remedies may be used in conjunction with biomedical processes
- Same-sex physicians are preferred
- Mother and grandparents help with infant rearing
### Mexican

- **Basic Beliefs & Practices**
  - Predominantly Roman Catholic
  - Usually pray, say rosary, and have priest nearby in time of crisis
  - Limited belief in "brujeria" as a magical, supernatural, or emotional illness precipitated by evil forces
  - Patriarchal social structure

- **Nutritional Preferences and/or Dietary Requirements**
  - Corn, beans, avocado, chiles, and yellow rice
  - Heavy use of spices

- **Communication Awareness**
  - Tend to describe emotions by using dramatic body language
  - Assertiveness is uncommon in a health care environment - silence and noncompliance are the most likely responses to disagreement
  - Direct eye contact is not highly valued
  - Direct confrontation is rude
  - Mexican men make a lot of physical contact in communicating; to withdraw may be considered insulting
  - Most Mexicans prefer to be called Latino (male) or Latina (female)
  - Very dramatic with grief, but otherwise diplomatic and tactful
  - Interpersonal trust is key - Written instructions should be complemented by personal instruction

- **Patient Care/Handling of Death**
  - May believe that outcome of circumstances is controlled by external force; this can influence patient's compliance with health care
  - Family (especially women) are significantly involved in caring for a dying relative
  - Autopsies and organ donation are usually resisted
  - Women do not expose their bodies to men or other women

### Middle Eastern

- **Basic Beliefs & Practices**
  - Islam is the dominant force in the lives of most Middle Easterners
  - When providing meals, be aware that Muslims may not eat pork

- **Nutritional/Dietary Preferences**
  - Communication should be two-way
  - You may need to share information about yourself in order for them to share information about themselves
  - Try to avoid direct eye contact with members of the opposite sex to avoid any hint of sexual impropriety
  - Accept that the husband may answer questions addressed to his wife
  - They tend to be loud and expressive, especially during childbirth, after someone has died, and when they are in pain
  - Be patient with "demanding" family members; they may see it as their job to make sure that the patient gets the best care possible
  - Personal problems are usually taken care of within the family; they will probably not be receptive to counseling
  - Sexual segregation is usually extremely important; assign same-sex caregivers whenever possible and maintain a woman's modesty at all time

### Nigerians

- **Basic Beliefs & Practices**
  - 50% Muslims, 40% Christians, other indigenous belief systems
  - Strong allegiance to family
  - Polygamy is legal and practiced
  - Patriarchal

- **Nutritional/Dietary Preferences**
  - Communication should be two-way
  - You may need to share information about yourself in order for them to share information about themselves
  - Try to avoid direct eye contact with members of the opposite sex to avoid any hint of sexual impropriety
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- **Patient Care/Handling of Death**
  - Epilepsy is thought to be a communicable disease - there is a belief that people with epilepsy should be avoided
  - Female circumcision is practiced
  - Strong belief in power of prayer
  - Health care worker may pray with patient if family feels comfortable
  - Death is taken quietly with anger (emotion is not necessarily expressed)
### Northern European

- Similar to American customs
- Protestant with large Catholic population and some Jewish
- Multi-ethnic groups

- Comparable to American diet - meat, vegetables, starches
- Coffee, hot tea, and beer

- Language: Language of the country and some English
  - Courtesy is of utmost importance
  - Address by surname and maintain personal space and good eye contact

- Maintain modesty at all times
- Stoic regarding pain tolerance
- Death is taken quietly with little emotional expression
- Patient/family tend not to question medical authority

### Oromo

- (see also Ethiopians)
- Islam is the primary religion
- Christianity is also practiced
- Traditional belief in Waaga - one omnipotent god

- Language: Oromiffa
  - Elders are accorded significant respect

- Medications are expected for every illness
  - Fear of Western medical procedures: blood draws and transfusions - blood cannot be replaced

### Polish

- Roman Catholicism is the primary religion
- The other religions are Russian Orthodox and Lutheran
- Patriarchal social structure
- Extended family is the norm
- Elders have a high status, but they may be reluctant to express their opinion

- Language: Polish
  - Eye contact is highly valued
  - Expressive communication style - grief and other emotions are displayed freely
  - It is important to use titles particularly with older people

- Patients may use herbal remedies in concurrently with biomedical treatments
- Physicians have high status
- There is tendency to focus on symptoms
- Generally prepared to express pain openly
- There may be a cultural reluctance to tell a dying patient of their prognosis
- There is shame associated with mental illness
- Preference for same-sex physicians for gynecological examinations

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### Portuguese

- The primary religion is Roman Catholicism
- Patriarchal social structure
- Corporal punishment is common

- Language: Portuguese
- The communication style is generally quite formal - use titles
- Eye contact is valued
- It is important that explanations extend to both the patient and their relatives
- Touching is appropriate

- It is generally considered inappropriate to inform a patient of a terminal prognosis; this issue should be discussed with your patient prior to diagnosis if possible
- Traditional remedies (like herbal teas) will be mixed with conventional medicine
- Will generally expect to receive medication for every visit
- Health professionals have a high status
- Preference for same-sex physicians for pelvic and breast examinations
- Relatives of patients will want to visit and stay for as long as possible
- Antibiotics are the expected treatment for all colds

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### Punjabi Community

- Religion: Sikh and Hindu
- There is an extended family structure
- Elders have a high status

- Language: Punjabi
- Eye contact is valued

- Alternative medicine may be used in conjunction with biomedical processes
- There is an acceptance of the use of medication
- There is an ambivalent attitude toward autopsy
- There is a preference for same-sex physicians

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Primary religions are Russian Orthodoxy, Protestantism, Islam, and Judaism.

Basic Beliefs & Practices
- Use hand gestures and facial expressions when English proficiency is minimal.
- They may speak loudly and seem abrasive.
- Make direct eye contact, be firm, and be respectful.
- Address patients as “Mr.” Or “Mrs.”
- Provide frequent updates on patient treatments and progress to help allay the anxiety of family members.
- They tend to have a high pain threshold and stoic attitude regarding pain.
- Since family members may want to withhold a fatal diagnosis from the patient; ask patient upon admission (or before the need arises, if possible) who should be given information about his/her condition.
- They will often prefer sponge baths to showers.
- Be aware that they may practice cupping.
- Patients and their families may frequently offer small gifts of food or chocolate; accept them, as it may be perceived as rude to turn them down.
- Many, especially the elderly, believe that illness results from cold. Therefore, keep them covered, close windows, keep the room warm, and avoid iced drinks especially if they have a fever.

Communication Awareness
- They may speak loudly and seem abrasive.
- Make direct eye contact, be firm, and be respectful.
- Address patients as “Mr.” Or “Mrs.”
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Patient Care/Handling of Death
- Physicians who cannot provide an immediate solution/remedy may not be respected.
- They may expect nurses to be friendly, warm, caring, and to “feel” for them.
- The gender of the provider is usually not an issue, but they may prefer to have a family member of the same gender present when performing personal care.
- They tend to have a high pain threshold and stoic attitude regarding pain.
- Since family members may want to withhold a fatal diagnosis from the patient; ask patient upon admission (or before the need arises, if possible) who should be given information about his/her condition.
- They will often prefer sponge baths to showers.
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Samoans and Tongans
- Collectivism, the valuing of community concerns over those of the individual, is an important cultural value.
- Serious disease is believed to result from interpersonal conflicts between family and friends, failure to carry out social roles, or disobeying of God's laws.
- The extended family is the common social unit and large families are valued.
- Commonly consume large portions of coconuts and coconut cream.
- Foods are generally eaten raw or steamed.
- It is appropriate to address Tongans by their first names.
- There is a tendency to be shy with strangers.
- Physical contact is natural and normal.
- It is important to let the relatives have as much time with the dying patient as possible.
- Relatives may prefer to take the body home before the funeral.
- There is a strong orientation to symptoms, and almost no awareness of prevention.
- Patients will often try to self-medicate before consulting a health professional.

Basic Beliefs & Practices
- The extended family is the common unit.
- Generations live together, older serbians may expect their families to care for them at home.
- Patriarchal - sons may be given preference over daughters.

Communication Awareness
- May consider it uncaring for physician to tell a patient they are terminally ill–usually prefer that the physician tell patient's family instead.
- Expressive communications style; crying and physical touching are acceptable.
- Formal communication preferred; use titles.
- Many questions, note-taking, or form-filling may cause anxiety due to recent experiences.

Patient Care/Handling of Death
- Religion: Orthodox Christianity is the primary religion.
- The extended family is the common unit.
- Generations live together, older serbians may expect their families to care for them at home.
- Patriarchal - sons may be given preference over daughters.
- Language: Serbian.
- May consider it uncaring for physician to tell a patient they are terminally ill–usually prefer that the physician tell patient's family instead.
- Expressive communications style; crying and physical touching are acceptable.
- Formal communication preferred; use titles.
- Many questions, note-taking, or form-filling may cause anxiety due to recent experiences.

Serbs
### Somalis

- **Language**: Somali; some Somalis also speak Arabic
- **Handshakes**: Generally only appropriate between men and women
- **Communication Awareness**: It may be considered unkind to inform the patient of a terminal prognosis. They may have an extensive herbal medicine tradition and may be fearful of caesarian delivery. During Ramadan (holy month where food and drink is forbidden between sunrise and sunset), Muslim patients may only be willing to take medication at night.
- **Patient Care/Handling of Death**: May believe that only God knows the exact time of death, therefore unlikely to accept a highly specific prognosis. They have an extensive herbal medicine tradition.

### Southern European

- **Language**: Language of the country and some English
- **Communication Awareness**: Talkative and very expressive, direct, and to the point. They are extroverted, like personal and physical contact, and have good eye contact.
- **Patient Care/Handling of Death**: Educated, yet reluctant to get medical attention. They are very independent. Birth control and abortion are accepted in some countries and not in others. The whole family is involved in care of ill family member.

### Spanish Community

- **Language**: Castilian
- **Communication Awareness**: Communication style will be based on the level of education; in many instances, education will be minimal. Eye contact is taken as a sign of respect and attentiveness. Touching is generally appropriate. Those with minimal levels of education may be reluctant to express disagreement openly to a health professional. Demonstrating respect to elders is important.
- **Patient Care/Handling of Death**: There is a growing knowledge and use of natural remedies. Health professionals have an extremely high status. There is strong tendency to focus on symptoms, and thus a lack of concern with preventative medication. There is a tendency to use over-the-counter medication. It is often expected that medication will be prescribed with any diagnosis. There is tendency not to admit mental health problems. Women who have only had one partner may think that they do not need pap smears. Preference for same-sex physicians for pelvic and breast examinations. Strong preference for breastfeeding.
### Sudanese Community

- **Basic Beliefs & Practices**
  - Literacy levels are extremely low
  - Approximately 70% are Sunni Muslims
  - Orthodox Christianity is a minor religion
  - Language: Arabic is widespread, some English is spoken
  - Touch is considered to be inappropriate between the sexes
  - Express pain openly
  - There is a tendency not to seek medical assistance quickly
  - There is strong expectation that medication will be prescribed with every visit to a doctor
  - Tendency to discontinue medication/treatment as soon as the symptoms have resolved
  - There is a strong cultural fear of hospitalization
  - Herbal remedies may be used in conjunction with biomedical processes
  - Strong preference for same-sex physicians
  - Female circumcision is practiced

- **Communication Awareness**

- **Patient Care/Handling of Death**
  - There is strong expectation that medication will be prescribed with every visit to a doctor
  - Tendency to discontinue medication/treatment as soon as the symptoms have resolved
  - There is a strong cultural fear of hospitalization
  - Herbal remedies may be used in conjunction with biomedical processes
  - Strong preference for same-sex physicians

### Tigrean

- **Basic Beliefs & Practices**
  - (see also Ethiopians)
  - Religion: Coptic Christianity
  - Coptic Christians do not eat meat, eggs, or milk on Wednesdays and Fridays
  - They also fast (restrictions on meat and dairy produce) for 55 days before Easter
  - Language: Tigrinya
  - Traditionally, men are not involved in the delivery of a baby

- **Nutritional Preferences and/or Dietary Requirements**

- **Communication Awareness**

- **Patient Care/Handling of Death**
  - There is strong expectation that medication will be prescribed with every visit to a doctor
  - Tendency to discontinue medication/treatment as soon as the symptoms have resolved
  - There is a strong cultural fear of hospitalization
  - Herbal remedies may be used in conjunction with biomedical processes
  - Strong preference for same-sex physicians

### Turkish Community

- **Basic Beliefs & Practices**
  - Islam is the primary religion
  - Patriarchal social structure
  - Language: Turkish
  - It is inappropriate for women and men to shake hands
  - Expressive communication style
  - Elders have a high status and older people should be greeted first
  - Eye contact is valued between people of the same gender
  - Titles are important for both the patient and the professional
  - Turkish patients will tend to avoid disagreement
  - Touching is appropriate for the people of the same gender and for children

- **Communication Awareness**

- **Patient Care/Handling of Death**
  - There is a cultural reluctance to inform patients that they are dying
  - It may be appropriate to tell the religious leader about an immanent death
  - Patients may seek to self-medicate and may also share medications
  - May expect to receive medication with every visit to the doctor
  - Patients may stop taking medication once symptoms disappear
  - Preference for same-sex physicians for gynecological examinations

### Ukrainian

- **Basic Beliefs & Practices**
  - The primary religion is Eastern Orthodox
  - Minority of Jews and Protestants
  - Language: Ukrainian

- **Communication Awareness**

- **Patient Care/Handling of Death**
  - Herbal and folk medicines tend to be used concurrently with biomedical practices
  - Mental health is traditionally taboo
  - Interpersonal trust is an important element in health care setting; US evidence suggests that a lack of trust will lead Ukrainians to ignore their health professional's advice
  - Immunization is compulsory in the Ukraine
Vietnamese

- Family loyalty is very important
- Religions include Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Cao Đì, Hao Hao, Catholicism, and occasional ancestral worship
- General respect and harmony
- Supernatural is sometimes used as an explanation for disease

- Rice often with green leafy vegetables, fish sauce added for flavor
- Meat used sparingly and cut into small pieces
- Tea is main beverage
- A sweet rice porridge is often given to ill people
- Often lactose- and alcohol-intolerant

- Language: Vietnamese, Cantonese
- Vietnamese language has several dialects. Also French, English, and Chinese
- Communicate in a formal, polite manner
- Limit use of touch
- A smile or a laugh does not relate to happiness or agreement
- Respect conveyed by nonverbal communication
- Use both hands to give something to an adult
- To beckon someone, place palm downward and wave
- Don’t snap your fingers to gain attention
- Person’s name used with title, i.e., “Mr. Bill,” “Director James.” “Yo” indicates respect, not agreement
- Flowers are only for the dead
- Negative emotions conveyed by silence and reluctant smile; will smile even if angry
- Head is sacred - avoid touching
- Husband or eldest male is the primary decision maker
- Heat done by “cupping” is used as a treatment to bring temperature balance
- Back rub - uneasy experience
- Common folk practices - skin rubbing, pinching, herbs in hot water, balms, string tying
- Misunderstanding about illness - drawing blood seen as loss of body tissue, organ donation causes suffering in next life
- Hospitalization is last resort

Yugoslavian (The Former Yugoslavia)

- Religion: Orthodox Christianity, Roman Catholic, Islam
- Families from the former Yugoslavia tend to value their independence; charity may not be easily accepted
- Family honor is important
- Food is seen as important to health; relatives may bring home-cooked food to supplement hospital meals

- Languages: Serbo-Croatian, Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian
- Ask your client how they want to be identified
- Large number of questions, note-taking, and form-filling may make clients anxious, due to past experience

- Recent migrants may become easily angry due to stress, trust may be difficult to establish
- Herbal medicine may be used concurrently with biomedical methods
- There may be a high level of fear about serious disease
- Medication is expected with every treatment
- Sick people are traditionally encouraged to communicate about suffering and the health professional is expected to accord high significance to this discussion
**Disclaimer**: The information in this guide is intended to provide awareness of cultural practices and beliefs. It is provided as a guide to alert you to some of the ways that culture impacts health care but may not necessarily apply to everyone who identifies with a particular group. It is not to be substituted with medical advice for any medical circumstances or condition and is not intended to be used for medical diagnosis or treatment. Contact your physician or healthcare provider for any health-related concerns.

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