

Cultural Awareness Guidance for Surgeons
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CHECKLIST

Cultural Competence Recommendations

Key Recommendations: -

Knowledge

***Aims of cultural competence:**

To ensure all surgeons:

- are aware of different cultures' beliefs concerning health and sickness.
- understand their own cultural beliefs and attitudes and how these beliefs may be different to their patients/colleagues' beliefs, and also how they may impact on them
- treat patients/colleagues from different cultural backgrounds in a way that affirms their worth and self-dignity.
- can accommodate to the different interaction/language styles of people from different cultures but still manage, steer and control interactions
- identify vulnerable or marginalised populations that may have limited access to resources for maintaining health
- understand different cultural beliefs on the process of death and dying and any ceremonies/procedures related to this
- demonstrate an understanding, sympathy and respect for the way people from other cultures deal with their illnesses
- can teach cultural competence and health advocacy for diverse cultures.

Skills

***Competent to:**

Language

- Be proficient in the English language
- Use simple/everyday language to reduce complexity of surgical concepts to people whose first language is not English and/or who may not have a good understanding of health and human body
- Craft questions in an open manner to elicit the necessary information from the patient/colleague

- Communicate in a friendly way (verbally and non-verbally) to generate a feeling of being 'approachable'
- Be sensitive to physical touch (and space) and when to use touch and not to use it and to recognise some cultures' expectations of it in certain circumstances e.g. delivering bad news

Direct and indirect communication

- Understand differences between direct and indirect communication according to cultural patterns
- Recognise that direct communication and lack of privacy can sometimes lead to offence in patients/colleagues
- Understand that some cultures communicate in non-verbal ways e.g. body language, contextual factors, silence.
- Recognise that others have their own preferences for interaction styles and to adapt accordingly, e.g. not everyone conforms to the Western rules for interaction (no gap, no overlap with direct eye-contact).

Politeness

- Understand that different cultures convey politeness in different ways and in varying degrees, e.g. an absence of verbal politeness expressions does not indicate impoliteness in some cultures
- Recognise that the use of politeness expressions when interacting with patients/colleagues is an important and expected part of surgical training and patient care in this country
- Recognise that making many requests/impositions on health care professionals does not necessarily indicate impoliteness in some cultures.

Face

- Identify the importance of face-saving communication in surgical training and patient care.
- Use suitable language to protect face of patients/colleagues, e.g. appropriate face-saving language in breaking bad news to patients or when giving developmental feedback to colleagues
- Welcome and encourage critical feedback from colleagues without feeling own face threatened.

Collective orientation

- Understand the difference between individual and collective orientation to health evident in some cultures
- Seek input and agreement from extended families/communities of those with a collective approach to health

Power and status

- Understand how different cultures respond differently to power and status differences e.g. some patients/colleagues may not be comfortable challenging the authority of someone in a higher status e.g. surgeon or they may withhold certain information or critical feedback due to status differences e.g. trainee and supervisor
- Understand how people from different cultures may not like or be used to teaching/speaking/interacting in front of others

Complementary alternative medicines

- Understand complementary alternative medicines and how some cultures prefer such methods e.g. acupuncture, meditation techniques and herbal remedies
- Recognise that some cultures view health and well-being in a holistic and/or spiritual context sometimes outside the individual's control

Behaviour/attitudes

- Work in a respectful, sensitive and inclusive manner with those patients/colleagues from different cultures
 - Be receptive and open-minded when listening to different cultural viewpoints on health and sickness even if contrary to one's own
 - Know when to seek further information and/or help from others, if needed, in any miscommunication or culturally offensive event.
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