

VITRA Health

Caregiver Education August Edition

Human Rights, Nondiscrimination, Cultural
Sensitivity



Grounds upon which discrimination may be inappropriate or unlawful:

- Gender
- Race
- Nationality
- Ethnic origin
- Caste
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Disability or health
- HIV status
- Union membership
- Political affiliation
- Marital status

Cultural sensitivity – caregiving**#1 Remember that each patient is an individual and should be treated as such.**

While every patient is a product of their background, each is also an individual with unique needs and preferences. Cultural sensitivity necessitates acknowledging the importance of culture without making assumptions about a patient based on race, country, religion, sexuality, or culture.

#2 Understand the barriers to communication

People from different cultures are often divided by barriers related to everything from language to economics to social differences. Whenever possible, strive to identify and overcome any of these challenges which may ultimately impede access to services.

#3 Accept that different cultures practice different kinds of medicine.

Western healthcare practices and philosophies are in their infancy compared to other types of medicine which have been practiced by people all over the world for generations. Maintain an open mind with patients and families who wish to consider alternatives or complements to conventional medical treatment.

#4 Respect cultural differences pertaining to body language

Not all people ascribe to the same beliefs about everything from eye contact to physical distance. Understanding and using appropriate body language as it applies to each individual can help patients feel more comfortable and respected.

#5 Welcome family involvement while maintaining your role as a patient advocate.

Caring for patients usually includes managing the family, as well. Considering each family's unique background and experiences -- comprising everything from accepting their choices about ethical issues to supporting their religious beliefs, -practices and preferences -- can help you deliver the best care.

#6 Look in as well as out

It's also important to keep in mind that cultural competence is an ongoing process which begins by looking inward. The more you understand how your own culture and background have shaped your own attitudes and beliefs, the more you'll be able to understand how who you are impacts – subconsciously or otherwise --your ability to effectively care for patients different than yourself.

Ultimately, cultural competence isn't at all about highlighting our differences, but instead about finding common ground. It's not a surprise, therefore, that these six cultural sensitivity practices share a common theme: They're all guided by a relentless commitment to open-mindedness, non-judgment, and respect.

While it would be difficult to know and understand everything about every culture, adopting these practices can help caregivers best meet the needs of culturally diverse patients and their families.

Source: www.mmlearn.org