

Tunisian Culture

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Tunisians make up less than 1% of our community, but as nurses, we must provide cultural competence no matter how prevalent the culture. (USA.com, n.d.). With the University of Illinois being a short drive away, this opens the door for more diversity. With more diversity comes the need for nurses who will keep an open mind when caring for patients whose beliefs differ from their own.

Tunisia is primarily a Muslim country. (Brown, 2021). Their customs and behaviors follow Shari'ah law. (Brown, 2021). They pray at least five times a day and must dress conservatively, especially the women. (Attum et al., 2021). Tunisian customs relate to health care because it would benefit nurses to keep religion, daily prayer, and modesty in mind when caring for these patients.

Tunisia strives to be progressive when it comes to providing health care. (Raifman et al., 2018). They have modern as well as traditional health practices. (Raifman et al., 2018). As Muslims, Tunisians believe that their spiritual health is directly related to their physical health and that suffering and pain are tests from God. (Attum et al., 2021).

Pregnant women are generally treated well in Tunisia. (Amroussia et al., 2017). They have one of the lowest infant mortality rates in Africa. (Brach et al., 2019). However, there has been a study of single mothers in Tunisia who have been subject to abuse during labor, delivery, and postpartum for not being married. (Amroussia et al., 2017).

Tunisians are very family-oriented. (Attum et al., 2021). Males oversee providing a livable income, while women take care of the household. (Brown, 2021). Infants are primarily cared for by the mother and her older children. (Brown, 2021). Most Tunisian breastfeed their infants. Fathers do not start taking up a role in the child's life until the child starts walking. (Brown, 2021). Tunisians respect their elders. (Attum et al., 2021). Whether they live with the

family is wholly dependent on the elder's situation. (Attum et al., 2021). Most of the aging population works well after the retirement age. (Attum et al., 2021).

Professional advice for caring for Muslim patients of the opposite gender is to limit eye contact and physical contact. (Attum et al., 2021). If the health care professional is a male and taking care of a female patient, before starting his assessment, he should ask whether he should direct his questions to her or prefer him to communicate through their partner. (Attum et al., 2021). Though, the same gender is preferable for a physical exam. (Attum et al., 2021). If this is not possible, another health care professional should present that is the same gender to comfort the patient. (Attum et al., 2021). To be respectful of a Muslim's modesty, ideally, a nurse would let the patient know ahead of time that the exam requires clothing removal but that they will return to them immediately after. (Attum et al., 2021).

Food is an integral part of Tunisian culture. (Attum et al., 2021). Eating is the time that families get together. (Attum et al., 2021). A Tunisian diet primarily consists of carbs, such as bread or couscous, but they also eat dishes with beef, eggs, and seafood. Tunisian do not consume pork or pork byproducts. (Attum et al. 2021). During Ramadan, a religious holiday, Tunisians will forgo food (also known as fasting) from sunrise until sunset. Depending on the situation, some women may be exempt from fasting while pregnant or breastfeeding. (Yashim, 2021). Mothers are encouraged to eat dates during and after delivery. (Yashmin, 2021). A culturally specific diet requirement that could impact hospitalization is knowing what hospital food items contain pork or pork byproducts.

Culture has a profound impact on healthcare, such as the perception of health itself. (Brach et al., 2019). Some cultures view pain, illness, and death differently, and it is essential to keep a person's specific culture in mind when planning their care. (Brach et al., 2019). Being

aware that cultures and beliefs vary from person to person is the first step in being culturally competent. (Brach et al., 2019). Cultural competence helps to promote a trusting relationship between nurses and their patients, leading patients to be more likely to follow their treatment and overall better healthcare and outcomes by incorporating a patient's specific belief into their diagnosis and treatment planning without showing cultural bias. (Brach et al., 2019). It is important to remain respectful, welcoming, and non-judgmental when caring for different cultures. (Brach et al., 2019). Some patients want more holistic treatments, focusing more on them as a person rather than a set of symptoms or to be defined by their illness. (Brach et al., 2019). By keeping an open mind, nurses, over time, develop the skill of being able to incorporate alternative nursing interventions to meet their patients' specific needs. (Brach et al., 2019). Some ways to provide culturally sensitive care in the maternity/child setting are to be mindful of economic, geographical, and social backgrounds that could affect minority groups' access to healthcare. (Jones et al., 2017).

There are three things that nurses can consider when working with Tunisian patients. One is asking the patient if she would like the questions directed towards herself or her partner. Two is to respect their modesty and inform them ahead of time when a physical exam is needed and that the assessment requires clothing removal. Three is to ask them if they need specific times to be undisturbed for prayer.

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