

Cultural Report: Nigeria (Yoruba)

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N432: Maternal Newborn Care

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Africa, also called the "Mother Continent," is one of the oldest inhabited continents on earth. Human and their ancestors have lived in Africa for over 5 million years (National Geographic Society, n.d.). It is also the second-largest continent bounded by the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Atlantic Ocean. Today, there are 54 countries that makeup Africa. This article will be focused on the west African country, Nigeria. Nigeria is ranked the most populated country in Africa, sixth in the world, and the most populous black nation (National Geographic Society, n.d.). Nigerians are known to be avid travelers and are found in all parts of the world including Illinois. In 2019, there were about 17,000 Nigerians living in Illinois (Migration policy institute, n.d.). Besides this demographic information, additional factors to be discussed in this paper include religion, healing beliefs and practices, family life, communication, and diet.

In Nigeria, there are three major ethnic groups: Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa. Yoruba will be the focus of the paper. The predominant religion of the Yoruba people is either Christianity or Islamic, while few still practice the traditional religion. In the Islamic belief, pork is prohibited, which should be considered when a patient is at the hospital. Also, the Muslims believe in modesty and privacy: if possible, they prefer a pregnant woman to be taken care of by a fellow woman. Overall, childbirth is the most crucial thing in this community of people, and if you do not give birth, then your legacy and heritage are not sustainable (Agnes & Ògúnjìnmí, 2019). Although giving birth is essential, marriage must come first before pregnancy, or it is believed that the child will not be successful in life. It is thought that as soon as the married couple is settled in their home, they should start having children, and after five months of no conception, the extended family starts to question if there is a problem (Agnes & Ògúnjìnmí, 2019). Once the wife is pregnant, the family begins to consider herbal medicine to ensure things like miscarriage

or congenital disabilities are avoided. It is also believed that pregnant women should not be in the hot sun or out late at night to avoid evil spirits. If found by the evil spirits, it is believed the spirit will replace the fetus, and the mother will give birth to a problematic or spiritually abnormal child (Agnes & Ògúnjìnmí, 2019). These beliefs can be related to healthcare because if a woman goes into labor at night, it can be forbidden for her to go to the hospital until the morning unless there is a medical emergency. Furthermore, scheduling appointments or possible inductions should be time-based if it is hot because pregnant women should avoid the heat. Additionally, due to possible interactions, the herbal medicine used traditionally should be considered when prescribing a pregnant woman medication.

Another important topic is how the Yoruba people view pain and suffering following family structure. Generally, the belief is that labor is well tolerated and pain relief is not usually considered an important part of intrapartum care (Kuti & Faponle, 2019). Although, some women desire pain relief, they typically go without one due to cultural beliefs. On the other hand, family is very important in the Yoruba culture, and hierarchy is usually based on the oldest male of the family. The Yoruba people traditionally have many beliefs related to patrilineal and patrilocal systems (Kuti & Faponle, 2019). Women do not necessarily need men to talk for them, but men are generally held in a hierarchy over women. Furthermore, elders are very respected, and their advice usually well received. When Yoruba people greet their elders, the male must prostrate, and the female must kneel on both knees to show respect.

Lastly, diet is especially important when a woman is trying to conceive or is pregnant. In the Yoruba culture, there are some restrictions other than Muslim practices of not eating pork. Overall, the belief is that women should eat more during pregnancy to sustain both her and the child but should avoid milk, eggs and goat meat (Kuti & Faponle, 2019). These restrictions can

affect the birth weight and development of the fetus. Nevertheless, dieting is not as pronounced considering other factors within the belief system of the Yoruba people that have been previously discussed.

References

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