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Culture Report: African Americans

The African American population makes up about 14.7% of the population in Illinois and 13.6% of the U.S. population as the third largest ethnic group in the country (US Census Bureau, 2021). Studies have shown that this ethnic group is subject to multiple health disparities that lead to complications during pregnancy and labor. African American women are 3-4 times more likely to experience complications during pregnancy and childbirth than white women and infants born to black women are twice as likely to be premature (Chambers et al., 2022). Because of this, it is important to understand the core values of individuals with this ethnic background. If nurses are able to educate themselves about other cultures, then they could take their preferences into consideration and build a trusting relationship to provide care that reduces the risk of complications.

African Americans have a diverse set of religious orientations within their community. A majority of black Americans are Christian and identify as Protestant with almost half being Baptist (Nguyen et al., 2019). There is also a number of African Americans in the United States that practice Islam and are impacted by Muslim culture (Attum et al., 2022). The religion of the patient should be assessed in order to provide holistic care and establish a positive nurse-client relationship. Studies have gathered evidence that African Americans are less trusting of medical professionals and institutions than other races. History of racial discrimination in the field of medicine and examples like the Tuskegee Syphilis Study are reasons for this point of view (Hall, 2020). As a result, building trust is a priority and could improve compliance. African Americans have strong extended family relationships in which elders are respected and the mother is the

head of the household. Family members may contribute to care of the infant and this could be influenced by advice given from older experienced women (Ricci et al., 2021). In these households, there are generally flexible and equal gender roles (Lloyd et al., 2021). Incorporating the family into the plan of care is beneficial for communication and better health outcomes. In addition to the holistic care approach, dietary preferences should be assessed by the nurse. Food is seen as a symbol of health and wealth (Ricci et al., 2021). According to a book about patient-centered care for African Americans, diet is primarily composed of chicken, pork, and fish with less beef and vegetables than other cultures except for fresh greens. Food is usually home-cooked and prepared with spices, seasonings, flour, and sugar with an increased intake of fried foods (Hall, 2020). Patients should be asked about their food preferences during hospitalization. Cultural practices during postpartum could include not bathing the newborn for the first week, applying oils to the skin, protecting the newborn from strangers for weeks, sleeping with the infant, and applying silver dollars to the infant's umbilicus (Ricci et al., 2021).

Understanding the culture of African Americans is a component of providing prenatal and perinatal care but there are other details to know concerning the possibility of health complications. Comorbidities that contribute to birth complications include elevated risks in which African Americans are 1.5 times more likely to have hypertension and 1.7 times more likely to have diabetes mellitus when compared to European Americans (Hall, 2020). Cardiovascular problems can arise from these health conditions and lead to harm to the mother or their infant. There are a disproportionate amount of occurrences of preeclampsia, postpartum hemorrhage, and embolic events in black women within the United States (Bond et al., 2021). Nurses should take this information into consideration when providing care while closely monitoring blood pressure. Education is also important to promote compliance with medications

related to control over adverse health conditions. Sickle cell disease is another prominent condition in this ethnic group as it occurs in 1 out of 365 African American births, so it is important to monitor prenatal care and vitals in affected mothers (Centers for Disease Control, 2022). Folk healing and home remedies are common, which necessitates an assessment to determine whether they are safe or can have adverse interactions (Ricci et al., 2021). Research has shown that African Americans are more sensitive to pain and have a lower pain tolerance (Hall, 2020). This is noteworthy because pain may be poorly controlled if not taken seriously, so interventions should be made accordingly to reduce stress. Practicing cultural competence and empathy in nursing allows for ideal patient-centered care.

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