Clinical Culture Report: Amish Culture

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With the growing number of Amish patients, nurses and other healthcare providers need to know and understand the culture to provide better quality healthcare. In Illinois, there are nineteen Amish settlements with a total population of 7,760 (The Young Center, 2022a). The largest Amish settlement in Illinois is located in Arthur, Illinois. This settlement has a total of 31 districts with an overall population of 4,360 (The Young Center, 2022c). This information means that more than half of Illinois' practicing Amish are in central Illinois. Several Amish women in these settlements may need care during pregnancy, labor and delivery, and postpartum.

When caring for Amish women seeking prenatal, pregnancy, and postnatal care, it is crucial to understand the religious beliefs associated with this culture. Amish patients believe the world around them can influence non-Christian behaviors and that a separation from the world around them preserves their humility. Amish patients base their lives on non-violence, hard work, and raising large families, and shun conveniences like electricity, television, and appliances (Zavada, 2022). Along with this distrust of the outside world comes doubt in modern medicine. Due to this distrust, many Amish prefer to use herbal remedies, alternative medical practices, and healthcare procedures are done at their home or community (Anderson & Potts, 2020). This indicates that Amish women may prefer nonpharmacological pain relief methods while in the labor and delivery unit.

When it comes to pain and suffering, the Amish internalize and avoid complaining (Anderson & Potts, 2020). Because of this, a critical nursing intervention is to frequently assess for pain in Amish patients even if it appears they are pain-free. When it comes to childbirth, Amish women prefer to be stoic, and most try to get through contractions silently. It is common practice in the Amish culture to give birth at home with a midwife present. The husband is also usually present to offer emotional support during childbirth (Jolly, 2017).

In Amish culture, the family is structured with the husband being the head of the house. The wives

often tend to their children and are focused on homemaking (The Young Center, 2022b). The Amish also tend to have large families (Zavada, 2022). The elderly members of the family are welcomed, respected, and integral to the Amish family dynamic. The elders are seen as wise and often guide younger family members. This indicates that Amish women may strongly listen to their elders' opinions and may want their input in their healthcare decisions, even during childbearing. When elderly family members become sick and need healthcare, the children usually move the parents into the home and provide care for them (Intriago, 2021).

Many Amish individuals do not have a phone at home, so their preferred form of communication is through letters. So, as nurses, it is necessary to inquire about the best ways to reach Amish patients to relay and receive information (Anderson & Potts, 2020). Amish women are allowed to speak to strangers and are even allowed to manage bakeries or greenhouses where speaking to strangers is necessary (The Young Center, 2022b). In social situations, the Amish prefer to stay socially distant when talking with strangers and may avoid eye contact (Anderson & Pots, 2020). It is a necessary nursing intervention to keep a distance when providing patient care to Amish individuals, especially when caring for laboring or postpartum patients.

As nurses, it is also essential to understand the Amish diet to get a better idea of what our patients consume daily and include that information when providing patient care, especially during prenatal and pregnancy care. Amish diets are usually high in carbs and fats. They include meals with potatoes, noodles, meats, and milk with no restrictions. The Amish also have gardens where they grow fruits and vegetables (Amish Heritage, 2022). A vital intervention would be to educate the Amish patient about what foods are best during pregnancy and postpartum. After the birth of a baby, the Amish may want to take herbs for pain relief, so it is critical to assess for alternative medication methods and allow them to use these methods in hospital settings if medically cleared to do so (Anderson & Potts, 2020).

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