

N432 Culture Report

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Many factors can lead to misunderstandings and errors in healthcare when caring for the Arabian culture. These factors include language barriers, cultural beliefs, health beliefs, gender norms, religious beliefs, and family dynamics. Culturally sensitive care is essential and needs implementation in all healthcare settings. Providing culturally sensitive care in the maternal/child setting faces many challenges, especially with the Arabian culture. General knowledge of the Arabian culture's core values can help those in healthcare to provide adequate, culturally competent, and sensitive care.

Arabs began immigrating to the United States around the 1880s. In today's world, approximately 3.7 million Americans trace to an Arab country, two-thirds living in ten states. One-third of Arab Americans are in Los Angeles, Detroit, and New York. 82% of Arab Americans are United States citizens, and most are native-born. Most Arab Americans' ancestry stems from Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Iraq (Arab American Institute, 2021). The Arab population makes up a large portion of the United States.

Religion strongly influences this culture and daily life, and most of the Arabian population is highly religious. A person who believes in Islam and lives according to the rules is called a Muslim. The five pillars of Islam are the fundamental beliefs that teach the way of life. The five pillars include faith (shahada), prayer (salat), charity (Zakat/Alms), fasting (sawn), and pilgrimage (haji) (Evason, 2019). In this culture, one valued social norm practice is gender separation. Women often wear something covering their hair and face whenever they are in the presence of men, called a non-mahram. Women can also wear a niqab that covers their hair and face, leaving an opening for their eyes (Evason, 2019). There are activities this religion encourages to engage in or prohibits, which are intensely lived by and a part of daily living.

These religious views have implications for healthcare to maintain modesty and gender segregation. The same healthcare provider is often preferred, especially with females. Accommodations regarding modesty in healthcare settings are done by knocking and allowing women time to cover themselves before others enter a room. Other considerations in healthcare settings include fasting during Ramadan, respecting religious observances, dietary considerations, privacy and modesty, and cultural sensitivity (Evason, 2019). Ramadan is a standard celebration that lasts a month in Arab culture. Ramadan consists of fasting from sunset to sundown, and pregnant women are exempt from participating. It is frowned upon for a pregnant woman to participate in Ramadan because people view her as sacrificing the health of her unborn baby.

To have an illness, pain, or dying is believed to be a test from God by the Arab community, a punishment for their sins, and to act as washing their sins away. Good health is a blessing and the greatest gift one can receive from God, so it is common for Arab Americans to treat their health as a religious duty to stay on good terms with God. They prefer spiritual well-being over physical well-being, and the beliefs that stem from their Muslim religion play a role in their healing (Attum et al., 2023).

The structure of the family in Arabian culture is highly valued and has many traditional values that are practiced. The family structure is usually extended with many generations living together or nearby. Extended family help to provide support within the family, which helps provide respect for elders and helps provide care for them when needed. The elderly receive love, attention, and respect from the younger members of their family. Arabian culture shows respect by greeting them first in a room, allowing them the most comfortable seat in the house, and being the first in line for anything (Evason, 2019). Many people of this culture will seek

wisdom from their elderly regarding any advice. The elders tell strong messages and stories to the younger generation highlighting morals and dignity. Elderly family members will usually live with their family and receive care.

"Patriarchal role." The men in this culture are expected to provide for their families financially, which is a religious value (Evason, 2019). When discussing the decision for their children, the husband and wife will discuss it together, but the man has the final say. The mothers maintain a traditional stay-at-home role to raise the children and manage the household. The men have authority and work outside the home to earn money and provide for their families.

This culture's language, Arabic, is one of the six official languages recognized by the United Nations. There are five forms of Arabic, including classical, standard, modern, spoken, and foreign (Evason, 2019). Arabs use an indirect communication style; therefore, context is critical. Nonverbal communication, such as body language and gestures, help understand the context of conversations. Politeness is a valued cultural norm of communication. People use formal greetings and titles to address others and meet new people. It is common for this culture to be comfortable with physical contact with those of the same gender (Evason, 2019). However, the opposite genders are to have no physical contact.

Arabians are more comfortable communicating with those of the same gender than the opposite. To show respect, opposite genders have limited eye contact, no physical contact, and do not share feelings (Evason, 2019). When seeking healthcare, this culture prefers to have care provided by those of the same gender if possible. If a female must communicate with a male practitioner, it is not offensive or disrespectful if a female does not speak and allows her husband to speak for her.

When an Arab woman is pregnant, she is to say additional prayers in the early hours of the morning and to read aloud prayers to achieve a healthy pregnancy and assist in preventing a miscarriage. Women of this culture are encouraged to read the Quran aloud throughout pregnancy (Hassan, 2022). There are traditions monthly for pregnant women, and they change as the farther she gets into her pregnancy. In the first weeks of pregnancy, she is to say specific prayers each day and blow on her stomach, eat a pomegranate every Friday during breakfast hours, and her hands must be placed on her stomach when saying prayers daily (Hassan, 2022).

In the ninth month of pregnancy, she cannot have any spicy foods or foods with spices, but she is to eat dates very often, must slaughter a goat, and she has to say specific prayers. There is no rule against male doctors during their pregnancy (Hassan, 2022). However, most women have only female doctors, midwives, or nurses when assisting in prenatal and labor care. Only female family members are allowed at birth, and male family members are not allowed into labor and delivery. There is no rule against fathers not attending the birth of their child, but it is a belief in Arab culture that childbirth should only consist of women; therefore, the father is not usually present (Hassan, 2022).

Common foods in this culture are halal food, grains, pasta, milk, seafood, vegetables, fruits, eggs, and cheese. In this culture, eating pig meat, boars, donkeys, birds with claws, and any animal that lives on land and in water, such as frogs and crocodiles, is wrong. Alcohol, sweeteners, and vanilla extract are forbidden (Hassan, 2022). Since this culture is not entirely strict on foods, the only negative impact of hospitalization regarding eating would be that the most common food, halal, cannot be eaten since most hospitals do not have halal on the menu. The option for the Arab individual is unlimited as they can still have grains, milk, cheese, pasta,

fruits, and vegetables; all hospitals provide those nutritious foods since they pertain to the food pyramid (Hassan, 2022).

Breastfeeding is often essential to mothers of this culture, and they will feed their infants soon after birth; they must breastfeed for two years. Before breastfeeding, the baby is given something sweet, rubbed inside the baby's mouth to help the digestive system. It is frowned upon if she does not breastfeed as it considers a religious duty to breastfeed the infant in their culture. The Quran explains the many importance of breastfeeding newborns (Hassan, 2022). If a woman gets divorced, arrangements must ensure she can breastfeed her infant even if the infant does not reside with her. Women in this culture eat "ratb," a specific date that gives quality to their breast milk. The Quran states that Allah told the prophet Isa to eat dates to help the child become patient and clever. There is no exceptional food for the mother to eat after childbirth. If the child's mother does not consume any food that is or stems from forbidden foods, she is allowed to eat them (Hassan, 2022).

In a childbearing experience, many implications and precautions must be made to provide culturally competent care for the Arabian culture. If the woman has the same gender preferences, this must be accommodated, and precautions must be in place for others to know before entering the room. There may be cultural or religious practices the women may need to engage in during the experience surrounding childbirth, and healthcare providers should support and be aware of these practices. Many Muslim fathers will not be present for the birth of their children (Evason, 2019). This culture believes the birthing experience only involves women, including family, doctors, and nurses.

A celebration is customary on the seventh day after birth, called an Aqiqah (Evason, 2019). After the child is born and brought home, the community gets together to have an

"Aqiqah," which happens on the seventh day after the child is born and serves as a celebration of life. The Aqiqah consists of the child's father slaughtering two animals, usually a goat or sheep. One-third of the meat goes to people experiencing poverty; the rest is as a meal in the community. Only relatives, friends, and neighbors attend the Aqiqah to show appreciation to the newborn child (Hassan, 2022).

Cultural competence is essential when communicating with patients, so it is imperative to understand their beliefs and values. Some suggestions for caring for the Arab culture is to provide them with an environment for prayer; the highest value in their culture is their religion, and they must fulfill that. Another way to show cultural competence to this culture while caring for an Arab woman is to ask if she wants to have a male or female doctor. Even though a female doctor is traditionally preferred, having a male doctor is not against the rules of their religion. However, it is essential for people not to assume but instead propose the question and let her make the decision. Please make sure that when caring for an individual of the Arab culture, look into alternatives to specific medicines that contain pork or gelatin because it is not permissible in their religion to consume, as well as attempt to make an accommodation for Halal food.

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