

Cultural Care in the Amish Birth

Jayda Davis

Lakeview College of Nursing

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In central Illinois, the Amish population has become one of the most prevalent religions healthcare workers have encountered. The term “Amish” was founded by Jakob Ammann in the 1770s and was founded through the Mennonite church (Britannica, 2023). The Amish are a Christian-based culture that values family, community, separation of the world, and humility (Britannica, 2023). According to the Arcola Chamber of Commerce (n.d.), over four thousand Amish live in Central Illinois. The Amish population prefers to live a nonconformist lifestyle (Britannica, 2023). Women will wear bonnets, long-covering dresses, and black shoes with stockings (Britannica, 2023). Men will wear black hats, dark-colored suits, or pants with suspenders (Britannica, 2023). The Amish attire reflects their respect for the religion and their interpretation of biblical scriptures against obeying the world's ways (Britannica, 2023). The Amish believe in following a simple lifestyle that avoids modern living and technology (Britannica, 2023).

Religion

The Amish believe religion is the way of life and strictly adhere to their religious protocols (Britannica, 2023). As there are no church buildings, the Amish will attend church services weekly in community buildings or different member's homes (Britannica, 2023). To lead church services, there will be a bishop, an elder, and two to four preachers (Britannica, 2023). Church services are conducted in German and Pennsylvania Dutch (Britannica, 2023). The Amish practices foot washing and celebrate the holy communion twice yearly (Britannica, 2023).

The Amish religion extends into healthcare beliefs and values. The Amish avoid modern medicine (Anderson & Potts, 2020). Members of the Amish community prefer natural care and complementary and alternative medicines (Anderson & Potts, 2020). The Amish prefer to seek

advice from family members, friends, and elders when searching for advice in healthcare (Anderson & Potts, 2020). When in contact with healthcare professionals, men will usually be the ones to talk and make decisions for their family members (Anderson & Potts, 2020). Healthcare providers should be respectful, honest, and straightforward when providing care to the Amish community (Anderson & Potts, 2020).

Healing Beliefs and Practices

The Amish community believes that the power of prayer and healing from God is the way of getting better (Anderson & Potts, 2020). The Amish will use supplements and natural remedies to promote the healing of an illness or injury. The Amish use minerals, vitamins, and herbs to manage sicknesses and promote better health (Anderson & Potts, 2020). The Amish will accept Western medicine and utilize massage and chiropractic therapies (Anderson & Potts, 2020).

Pregnant Amish women prefer using midwives and giving birth in homes or birthing centers (Anderson & Potts, 2023). Amish women are least likely to have prenatal care due to the cost and travel commitments (Anderson & Potts, 2023). Pregnant Amish women prefer alternative medicine and seek health advice from community members (Anderson & Potts, 2023). If there is a need for a hospital birth, the mom will prefer the presence of female healthcare providers and the least invasive treatment measures. Additionally, males or the father are not allowed in the room while the wife gives birth (Anderson & Potts, 2023).

Family Life

Family is vital in the Amish culture; most families consist of seven children or more (Amish 101, 2023). In the Amish family, the father is the head of the household (Amish 101, 2023). Chores and various tasks are delegated by the sexual role in the Amish family. The wife is

expected to cook, clean, wash, and do other household chores while the husband works and manages the farm (Amish 101, 2023). Divorce and separation are forbidden in the Amish community (Amish 101, 2023). Amish children must obey and honor their parents throughout homecare (Anderson & Potts, 2020). The elderly family members tend to maintain their lifestyles, are highly respected, and will remain involved in daily activities with their families (Anderson & Potts, 2020). The elderly Amish population fears becoming a burden and losing the ability to contribute to their families and Amish community members (Anderson & Potts, 2020).

Communication

In the Amish culture, the Amish do not believe in technology and do not have internet, computer, or phone services in their homes (Anderson & Potts, 2020). Many Amish members rely on written communication or outside phone services to communicate (Anderson & Potts, 2020). The husband is typically the one to speak for the family. According to Anderson and Potts (2020), the husband and wife are equals in making healthcare decisions, but the husband will speak of the final decisions being made. Healthcare professionals must consider their cultural differences, communicate respectfully, and provide resources in written materials for Amish families (Anderson & Potts, 2023). Providers and healthcare personnel must interact face-to-face with Amish patients (Anderson & Potts, 2020). The Amish will prefer a slower conversational pace and will refrain from using eye contact (Anderson & Potts, 2020). Maintaining physical distance and keeping touch to a minimal minimum is vital, besides a polite handshake (Anderson & Potts, 2020). The Amish are considered good listeners, and communication should be honest and friendly, avoiding aggressive tones and behaviors (Anderson & Potts, 2020).

Diet

The Amish are known to use dietary supplements and vitamins in their diet (Anderson & Potts, 2023). The Amish have no dietary restrictions and will have a natural, unrestricted diet (Anderson & Potts, 2023). Pregnant Amish members follow a natural, nutritious diet before and after the baby's birth (Timbs, 2023). Herbal supplements also aid in a healthy diet during and after pregnancy (Timbs, 2023).

Implications of Core Values on Healthcare in Childbearing Experience

As discussed before, in the setting of an Amish childbirth, there will be an exclusive presence of female providers and midwives (Anderson & Potts, 2023). The Amish tend to prefer home births as they view it as the best environment to welcome a new baby into this world (Timbs, 2023). Natural methods and practices aid childbirth (Timbs, 2023). Interventions needed medically are usually avoided unless it is needed for the baby's or mother's health (Timbs, 2023). The mother will utilize breathing and relaxation techniques to manage pain during labor and delivery (Timbs, 2023). The Amish view the pain of laboring and delivery as a natural process that will bond the mother and the baby together (Timbs, 2023). After the baby's birth, it is a ritual for the baby to be washed and dressed by a midwife or female family member, as this signifies the purification of the baby and the welcoming of the baby into the Amish family and community (Timbs, 2023). In postpartum care, the mother must be provided time to rest and bond with the baby (Timbs, 2023). The Amish value the postpartum era as a time to reflect and adjust to allow the mother to accept her role of nurturing and caregiving for the baby (Timbs, 2023).

Conclusion

Providing cultural care to Amish patients in the maternal/child setting requires healthcare providers to be aware of and respect their diverse beliefs and practices. As a future nurse, being

educated and understanding different cultural beliefs and religions is essential. Some tips on what to do when caring for or interacting with an Amish patient is to acknowledge the resources that the Amish culture is limited to without having electricity, phones, or internet. Be respectful by maintaining optimal space and providing face-to-face interactions with Amish patients. It is also essential to respect the patient's privacy and dignity and ask permission before touching or providing care to the Amish patient. Acknowledging their core values, health practices, religious beliefs, communication styles, dietary preferences, and family dynamics can help healthcare professionals gain trust, respect, and establish a positive rapport. Doing this will lead to positive and improved health outcomes and health experiences for this community.

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