

N314 Vulnerable Populations Paper

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The American Hospital Association (AHA) defines cultural competency in health care as “the ability of systems to provide care to patients with diverse values, beliefs and behaviors, including the tailoring of health care delivery to meet patients’ social, cultural and linguistic needs. A culturally competent health care system is one that acknowledges the importance of culture, incorporates the assessment of cross-cultural relations, recognized the potential impact of cultural differences, expands cultural knowledge, and adapts services to meet culturally unique needs. Ultimately, cultural competency is recognized as an essential means of reducing racial and ethnic disparities in health care” (AHA et al. 2013).

The definition of cultural competence in health care is the definition of what we should all strive to remember every day. No two people are alike, whether it be because of their upbringing, social status, sexual preference, gender identity, religious beliefs, race, or any other defining factor we use to identify ourselves. Any person who is seeking the help of a medical professional needs to be treated with the respect that we would expect to be treated with. Health care professionals need to see this importance to be able to provide the best care possible while maintaining the patients’ dignity and respect. Treating your patient in a culturally competent way will help build the trusting bond that is needed to get all the information and treat what they are there for. If a patient feels they are being judged, looked down upon, treated disrespectfully, or feel shame then they are not going to be as forthcoming with medical data that is needed to properly assess them which will lead to lack of diagnosis or it taking much longer to get to the correct diagnosis.

Being culturally competent however, goes beyond just healthcare. In order to be a proper and functioning member of society you need to have at least the basic foundation of

cultural competence. To sum it up, be a good human. Understanding how to be culturally competent teaches you how to interact respectfully with people who are not similar to yourself.

One vulnerable population in the United States that requires cultural competence is the homeless population. There are a multitude of things that can affect how the homeless population are treated. Homeless people come from all types of backgrounds therefore they are treated as a special population because of their lack of stability and basic needs but they also will be culturally different. There can be a great deal of variance depending on where in the country you are located as well. Our homeless people can be immigrants, veterans, substance abusers, aspiring artists who didn't make it big and gambled everything they owned on that one shot. Cultural competence is important to these people when they need help.