

Vulnerable Populations

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N314: Introduction to Professional Nursing

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October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024

## Cultural Competence

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, cultural competence is “the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services; thereby producing better outcomes”. In nursing and patient care, it's best to have a basic level of cultural competency because you will be in contact with many individuals varying in culture, practices and beliefs. Respecting and understanding cultural differences and practices will better serve you while at work. Cultural competency is the meaningful, culture-based use of health and care knowledge to coordinate the needs of individuals or groups and helps them to acquire good health and well-being or to cope with illnesses, disorders, and death (CDC, 2023) but nurses providing culturally competent care have the potential to improve the quality of care, to heighten patient satisfaction, and to challenge racism in healthcare, which leads to better health outcomes in patients from a diversity of cultural backgrounds (CDC, 2023). According to Mrayyan et al. “nurses have legal and ethical obligations to maintain their competency that helps them perform their duties while integrating multiple elements, including knowledge, techniques, attitude and thinking ability”. Cultural competence is being able to adjust to an individual culture in the most effective way to serve the purpose or needs of an individual.

## The Incarcerated Bias/Judgement

The incarcerated population is a vulnerable population for a multitude of reasons. First and foremost, they do not have adequate health care services. They only have the nurse on call and the local hospital in the area. Due to this lack, incarcerated individuals have a longer response time to any presentable distress. They are medicated on past medical history and not often having annual effective routine check-ups. These individuals are vulnerable because they do not have round the clock care, having only a few opportunities to seek help. Incarcerated individuals are subject to judgement and stereotypes. Because they are in jail, many think that they do not have the luxury of being treated like a normal citizen. I personally believe that it doesn't matter what a person looks like, where they are from, or what they did to place them in jail/prison, all individuals with a pulse should always be treated fairly. Another reason they are the most vulnerable is that when a natural disaster occurs there are laws in place that the workers in the prison are to save themselves first and the prisoner are left to tend for themselves. I do not think that is the appropriate way to treat an individual, especially for those with a medical condition. What they did to get them in prison should not interfere with how they receive health treatment.

## Vulnerable Population Question

I was asked if I'd want to know the crime of the prisoner to whom I have been assigned to deliver care to and I don't think it'll make a difference whether I know the crime or not. I truly believe as a professional nurse, you must put your bias and judgements aside when caring for any individual. We, as nursing professionals, took an oath to the job title and responsibilities of caring for our patients/clients and its our duty to complete a desired task. Personally, I would not mind knowing what the crime was just to be able to have some context of why that individual is incarcerated. I will be able to have some time to build rapport if I am continuing care and try to understand where this individual mindset was at when committing the crime. Since they are a vulnerable population, I think its best we, as nursing professionals, to save a level of empathy. Yes, they committed a crime. Yes, they make a mistake. And yes, they are still human who deserve all human rights to receiving care. So to me, I don't mind if it did not know their convicted crime.

## Reference

Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024, June 24). *Cultural Competence In Health And Human Services*.  
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