

Being Culturally Competent In Today's Society

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Introduction to Professional Nursing

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“ I have neither given , nor will tolerate others’ use of unauthorized aid.”

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Having to deal with different types of cultures is one of the many issues that a professional nurse will have to be able to accommodate during their career. As a nurse, you will have to overlook and understand many personal beliefs for the successful rehabilitation of patients under our care. Cultural competence is a tool that a professional nurse is able to use in order to make sure that you are aware of the individuals needs. The unborn, the hispanic community, and the incarcerated, are a few of the vulnerable population that would increase a professional nurses needs to be culturally competent. By having awareness, a positive attitude, knowledge, and skills, we will be able to treat the client to the best of our ability and have a better understanding of not just the client, but about oneself.

First, the decision that some individuals make in regards to an unborn child may sometimes be difficult to personally understand. “ Recent research shows that smoking, tobacco or marijuana, taking prescription pain relievers, or using illegal drugs during pregnancy is associated with double or even triple the risk of stillbirth. Estimates suggest that about 5 percent of pregnant women use one or more addictive substances.” (National, 2018). When a mother does not take good prenatal care of herself, for example doing drugs, smoking, and drinking, it may be difficult to separate our personal beliefs and even our emotions about their choices. From a health care provider perspective, we understand the benefits of living a healthy life , especially when it comes to an unborn child. Having a strong cultural competence will ultimately help the health care provider focus on what the client really needs. As a nurse, the focus should be placed

on the mother, since without her well-being, the unborn child will not have a chance. Educating the client in regards to risk factors about the side effects of her lifestyle might be enough to encourage a change. Finding out about the client's mental health status is also an important factor when determining a health plan; maybe she has economic or personal issues that are causing undue stress. Becoming aware of her situation as a whole will allow the healthcare professional to be able to understand the client and not just the situation that she and her unborn child are part of.

Second, the hispanic community is another population that is very important to have culturally competence towards. There are many hispanics from different parts of Latin America that have varying degrees of education when it comes to the english language. Trying to communicate with someone when there is a language barrier may sometimes be a stressful situation for both parties involved. In this type of situation, a translator might have to be part of the assessment process. If an interpreter is brought in to facilitate communication, the most important action to be aware of as a healthcare professional is to ensure the clients emotions are not disregarded in the translation. Establish contact with the client at all times by asking questions directly to them and maintaining eye contact if it is culturally acceptable to do so. These actions will relate to the client that they have your complete attention and you are their to help them in their time of crises. This will demonstrate that there is an understanding in cultural competence because you are aware of the need for clear and precise communication regardless of the spoken language.

Lastly, the incarcerated is a population that is very controversial in regards to their medical care. Understanding the culture of the corrections system is very important, not only for the incarcerated client but for the healthcare professionals safety. Individuals who are incarcerated are required by law to have medical attention regardless of the crime they have been convicted. “ The legal reason for providing healthcare to prisoners was stipulated in 1976 Supreme Court *Estelle v. Gamble* decision, in which the Court held that deprivation of health care constituted cruel and unusual punishment [1], a violation of the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution. This interpretation created a de facto right to healthcare for all persons in custody, whether convicted (prisoners) or not (pretrial detainees)” (Paris, 2008). For this reason, some people might find it incomprehensible because there are millions of law abiding citizens that do not have health care, while criminals are assured health care when they are in the corrections system. It might seem somewhat backwards, but when a healthcare professional understands that people in the U.S. prison system do not have a means of purchasing or qualifying for any kind of medical insurance, they will be more aware and understanding of why this law is in place. The healthcare professional should also be aware that law abiding citizens do have various means to be able to have medical coverage; whether prioritizing their income, purchasing a medical insurance policy, paying out of pocket for medical care, and for those who qualify, there is government assistance for medical care. The caveat of this situation is that no matter who the client is, medical treatment will not be denied to anyone seeking medical attention for whatever ailment, sickness, and/or disease.

The one reason that might make the decision to provide healthcare to a criminal more challenging would be the crime they committed. Personally, I would like to be informed of the reason of their conviction so that I may be better equipped to fully understand the client as a whole person. For instance, if the individual committed a heinous crime, especially towards a child, a non healthcare professional might not feel inclined to ease them of their medical distress. As a professional nurse, our choice would have to be to provide whatever medical treatment the criminal might be in need of without judgement or discrimination. A human life is a human life whether the judicial system has deemed them unfit to be part of society or because our personal beliefs.

In conclusion, being culturally competent is a key attribute to providing health care to the human population. There are many challenges with the large spectrum that exists in the different races and people living in the U.S. From the unborn child to the hispanic community and even the incarcerated, cultural competence is required to ensure fair, equal , and unbiased care. By being aware and educating ourselves about the diversity in our country, the healthcare provider, specifically a nurse, will be able to focus on the task of giving people the treatment they require.

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