

Religion

The Islam religion is prevalent among society and spans throughout the world. Islam is the name of the faith, and followers of this religion are termed Muslims. There are approximately 1.8 billion Muslims worldwide, which constitutes Islam as the second-largest religion in the world after Christianity (History.com Editors, 2018).

The word "Islam" means "submission to the will of God." (History.com Editors, 2018). Muslims worship only one God, which in Arabic is called "Allah." Their holy text is named The Quran.

There are guidelines that Muslims must follow, which are named the Five Pillars of Islam, and these include Shahada, Salat, Zakat, Sawm, and Hajj (History.com Editors, 2018). Shahada is to affirm one's faith in Allah and belief in Muhammad. The Salat is praying five times a day at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and evening. The Zakat is giving to those in need. Sawm is the fast during Ramadan. Hajj is the pilgrimage to Mecca and should be done at least once during a person's lifetime.

Healing Beliefs and Practices

Understanding the Muslim faith will allow healthcare personnel to deliver appropriate health care in a culturally sensitive manner. This is especially important to take note of when working with female Muslim patients during childbearing years. When providing care to Muslim individuals, it is imperative to understand the impact that the Islamic faith has on the delivery of healthcare. There are privacy and touch issues, dietary practices, and unacceptable medicines unique to the Muslim religion (Attum, 2019). According to Firdous et al., research suggests that religion has a profound influence on women's choices, such as the timing of when to have children, the size of family, decision-making on contraceptives, fertility treatments, and other reproductive issues (2020). Healthcare personnel needs to be aware of the differences in health, illness, diet, the influence of traditional medicine, and privacy concerns, especially regarding the sensitive nature of delivery.

When healthcare professionals interact with a patient of the Muslim faith, they should follow guidelines to avoid any upsets. It is essential to prevent eye contact and physical contact between a healthcare worker and a patient of the opposite sex. Furthermore, a male doctor may have to communicate through a male spouse if the patient is female (Attum, 2019). Additionally, when performing a physical exam, it is best to have healthcare personnel of the same gender.

This is specific to performing a gynecological exam or identifying a female patient if she has a rupture of membranes (ROM). There will be times when this is not possible, and in this instance, having a third person in the room that is the same gender of the patient should comfort the patient (Attum, 2019). Abiding by these rules will allow for easier transitioning of care between patients of the Muslim faith.

Communication

Along with general privacy concerns, there are guidelines unique to males and females of the Muslim faith. Beards are religiously symbolic in males, and men will usually have a beard or some sort of facial hair. Most men avoid shaving. If any hair needs to be shaved, a male should cut the patient (Attum, 2019). Females are to be dressed modestly. Females should have the majority of their bodies concealed, only exposing their hands and faces.

Men will also be dressed modestly, wearing clothing that conceals their knees, or even having their clothing go beyond their knees (Attum, 2019). Additionally, Muslim men and women are very respectful of their elders. Females can speak to strangers with their partner's

confirmation. Typically, men will do the talking if husband and wife are together (Attum, 2019).

Family Life

The traditional Muslim family is an extended family. It usually includes parents, children, grandparents, and elderly relatives. Most Muslims believe that extended families mean more excellent stability, continuity, love, and support (Firdous et al., 2020). After birth, the baby's first taste should be something sweet, so parents may chew a piece of date and rub the juice along the baby's gums (BBC, 2009).

It was a practice carried out by the Prophet Muhammad and believed to help tiny digestive systems kick in. After seven days, the baby's head is shaved (a tradition also carried out by Hindus). This is to show that the child is the servant of Allah. Although Hindus may take the baby's hair to India and scatter it in the holy river the Ganges, Muslims weigh it and give the equivalent weight in silver to charity (BBC, 2009).

Diet

The diet that accompanies the Muslim religion includes: prohibiting alcohol, non-Halal animal fats, pork, by-products of pork, and any animals that have not been slaughtered according to the Islamic customs (Attum, 2019). Some patients may refuse hospital food if these rules are not followed. If possible, try to provide eggs, fruits, seafood, and vegetables to the patients. During Ramadan, which is a holy month during which most Muslims fast, food and liquid are not to be consumed between sunrise and sundown.

Muslims practice is to then consume a pre-dawn meal before fasting during the day. This diet restriction may cause issues, especially in those that have diabetes. Patients who plan to do the fast should be provided with fasting-focused diabetes education to avoid complications (Attum, 2019). It is important to note that the very young, old, or sick are excused from fasting as this could be detrimental to their health.

There are some permissions and exceptions that are individual to the Muslim fast. The following are permitted without breaking the fast: injections and blood tests, medications absorbed through the skin, gargling (as long as the liquid is not swallowed). The following will break the fast if completed: ear and nose drops, suppositories and pessaries, and inhaled medications (Attum, 2019).

Muslims are required to pray five times a day: starting at dawn, midday, midafternoon, sunset, and then at night. These various prayer times may interfere with healthcare and mealtimes from the medical facility, and special arrangements may need to be made. Friday is an essential day of the week for Muslims since a special prayer, the Congregational Prayer, is performed at noon.

Caring for Muslim patients is being sensitive and aware of the specific cultural practices that these individuals value. Muslims believe that Allah (God) ultimately preserves life, even though the healthcare team provides life-saving care. It is also important to note that, in a life-threatening circumstance, there are no restrictions on medications or surgical interventions for the Islamic faith.

The Muslim population may be at an increased risk for several diseases due to perceived restrictions on medical care. These limitations may include gender preference of healthcare providers, modesty in clothing attire, and misconceptions about what causes specific illness (Attum, 2019). Diet also plays a vital role in Islamic beliefs. Other barriers may present from the

complexity of the health care system along with healthcare personnel who lack knowledge of the Muslim faith along with a lack of culturally competent medical services. Being aware of the Islamic teachings will allow nurses and healthcare personnel alike to provide the highest quality care to their Muslim patients.

References

- Attum, B. (2019). Cultural competence in the care of Muslim patients and their families. *In: StatPearls* [Internet]. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; 2019.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK499933/>
- BBC. (2009). Muslim birth rites.
[https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/ritesrituals/birth.shtml#:~:text=Muslim%20birth%20rites&text=Come%20to%20prayer.%22\)%20are,juice%20along%20the%20baby's%20gums.](https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/ritesrituals/birth.shtml#:~:text=Muslim%20birth%20rites&text=Come%20to%20prayer.%22)%20are,juice%20along%20the%20baby's%20gums.)
- Firdous, T., Darwin, Z., & Hassan, S. M. (2020). Muslim women's experiences of maternity services in the UK: Qualitative systematic review and thematic synthesis. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 20(1), 115. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-020-2811-8>
- History.com Editors. (2018). Islam. <https://www.history.com/topics/religion/islam>.