
CULTURAL BELIEFS AND HEALTH PRACTICES

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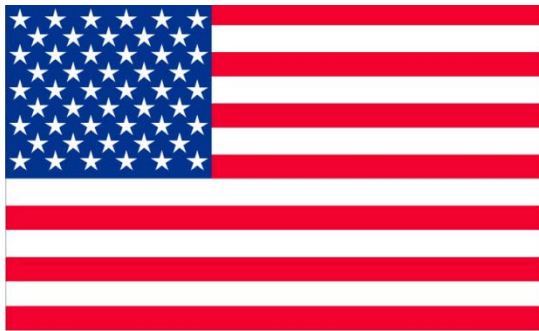
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
INDIANA UNIVERSITY



Indiana University Health

Introduction

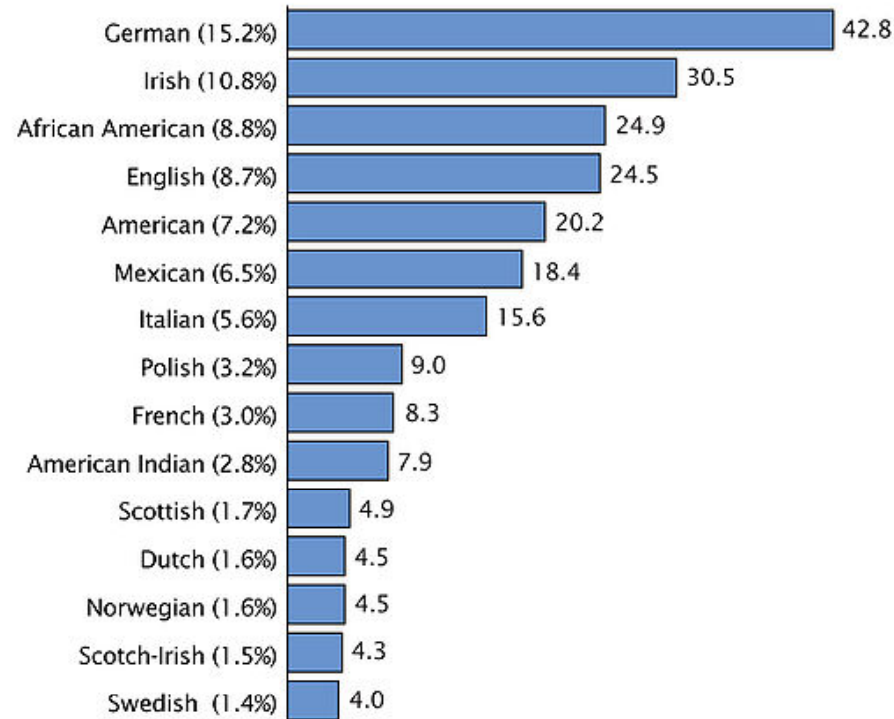
- Make no assumptions
- Similar principles, not rules
- As health care providers, we work to relieve suffering and promote healing
- We are not here to judge



2000 US Census

Figure 2.
Fifteen Largest Ancestries: 2000

(In millions. Percent of total population in parentheses.
Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection,
sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see
www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf3.pdf)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation.

Cultural Competence in Health Systems

- 9 techniques most frequently described in literature
 - 1) Interpreter services
 - 2) Recruitment and retention of minority employees
 - 3) Training cultural competency
 - 4) Coordination with traditional healers
 - 5) Use of community health workers
 - 6) Culturally competent health workers
 - 7) Inclusion of family and/or community members
 - 8) Immersion into another culture
 - 9) Administrative and organizational accommodations

Interpreter services

- Many limited English-speaking people wait for an emergency to seek medical care. Why?
- Because they fear a situation where they cannot clearly communicate and be understood.
- Solutions:
 - Dual-handset phone system
 - On-site live interpreter bank
- Be aware of dialects and idioms
- Be mindful of gender differences for particularly sensitive topics
- Medical terminology may be difficult to translate
- Avoid using family members



Recruitment and Retention of Minority Employees

- Establishing a set of principles for respectful treatment of all people
- Track staff satisfaction by racial and ethnic groups
- Change the culture of the work environment so that all employees feel valued and given the opportunity to advance in their field
- If your employees at all levels don't feel respected by the administrators, how can your patients from similar ethnic backgrounds feel respected?



Cultural Competency Training Programs

- Conferences and training programs increase cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills
- Promotes changes in staff behavior and patient-staff interactions
- Orientation of all staff or frequent in-services
- *Workplace* bias, whether subtle or blatant, takes an emotional toll.
- You just can't say it, you must live it



Coordination with Traditional Healers

- Many Americans use traditional healers and religious leaders to guide their medical care
- Clinicians need to coordinate care with those healers to increase compliance
- In NYC, when caring for Orthodox Jewish patients
 - Call Rabbi to get permission for C-section
 - Call Rabbi to get permission for hysterectomy
 - Rabbi will refer whole congregations to you
 - Rabbi arranges genetic testing (for matchmaking)



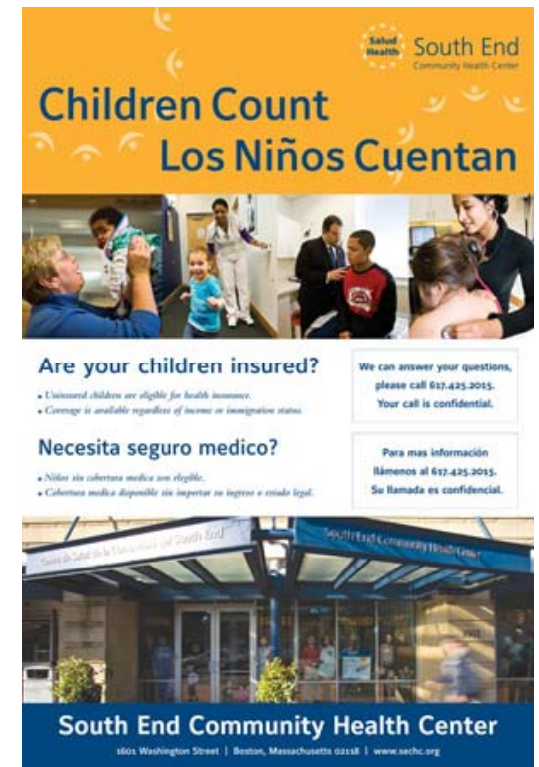
Use of Community Health Workers

- Members of minority communities can be used to reach out and provide direct services and health education
- Can act as liasons
 - Bring patients in for care
 - Provide cultural link
 - Overcome distrust
 - Enhance communication
 - Increase access to care



Culturally Competent Health Promotion

- Culture-specific attitudes and values must be incorporated into messages such as screening tools and public information campaigns



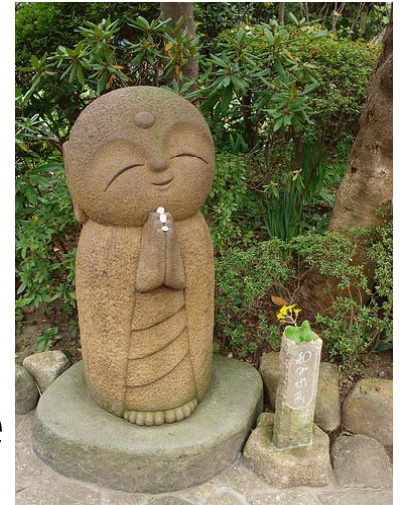
Include family and community members

- May be crucial in obtaining consent and adherence to treatment
- In Asian cultures, the oldest male relative needs to make decisions
- In Muslim cultures, try to obtain a female interpreter for a female patient; after a certain age, women are not allowed to serve as interpreter



Immersion into Another Culture

- Enables participants to overcome ethnocentrism
- Increase cultural awareness
- Integrates cultural beliefs into health care practices
 - Hot and Cold theory in Hispanic and Asians
 - Ancestor Worship in Asians
 - Jehovah's Witness and blood products
 - Bereavement and pregnancy loss in all cultures
 - Vaginal bleeding in Jewish culture



Asians in Indiana

- Indianapolis is home to more than 2,000 Burmese from two ethnic groups:
 - the Chin tribe
 - 1300 Chin live in Perry Township
 - the Karen tribe
 - 700 Karen are in Washington Township.
- Fort Wayne has over 3,500 Burmese refugee residents
- Language is different



Orthodox Jews in New York

- Largest Jewish population outside of Israel
- Consult with Rabbi regarding medical decisions
- Grand multiparity; avoid C-sections at all costs
- Avoid discharge to home during Sabbath
- Sabbath elevators
- Kosher diet and medications
- Avoid causing vaginal bleeding
- Men stay outside of delivery room
- Men do not shake hands with women
- Women wear wigs; otherwise headcovers in labor
- Multiple holy holidays and celebrations to observe



Organizational Accommodations

- Improving access to and use of health care
 - Clinic locations (access to transportation)
 - Hours of operation (weekends, holy holidays)
 - Physical environment (locked units, elevators, buzzers)
 - Written materials, signage, consideration for illiteracy
 - Special diet menus (Kosher, Halal, Asian, etc.)
- Health care systems can make themselves more welcoming and accessible to patients

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouixAnRwoA8&feature=player_detailpage

Role of the Health Care Provider

- The basic concepts of treating patients with respect, compassion, and honesty are still what are most important to patients, regardless of cultural/ethnic background.
- It is not our place to judge, but understanding a person's cultural beliefs will help to improve patient compliance and well-being.



Thank you!

