

8. Cultural Beliefs and Health Care



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Different cultures and religions may have different beliefs about **illness, life and death**. It is important for Practitioners to respect these differences. They must be considered in providing medical care.

E.T.H.N.I.C. Levin, S, Like, R and Gottlieb 1998



The patient **Explains** the problem/condition, home remedies used and **Treatment** sought from **Healers** & other non-professionals. **Negotiation** of mutually acceptable options results in **Intervention** that includes the patient's beliefs and practices as well as **Collaboration** with family, healers and community resources.

EXPLANATION

What symptoms do you have?

What do you think may be the reason you have these symptoms?

TREATMENT

What kinds of medicines, home remedies, or treatments have you tried for this illness?

Is there anything you eat, drink, or do (or avoid) on a regular basis to stay healthy?

HEALERS

Have you sought any advice from alternative/folk healers, friends, or others (non-doctors) for help with your problems? Explain.

NEGOTIATE

What are the most important results you hope to achieve from this intervention?

What options would be mutually acceptable for practitioner and patient incorporating patient's beliefs?

INTERVENTION

Practitioner must determine an intervention for the patient which may include incorporating alternative treatments, spirituality, and healers as well as other cultural practices.

COLLABORATION

Practitioner must work together with the patient, family members, other health care team members, healers, and community resources to implement the treatment.

Video:

[How Culture Connects to Healing](#)

Cultural Perspectives

Culture	Health Concepts	Cause of Illness	Traditional Healers	Methods of Treatment	Response to Pain
South African	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain harmony of body, spirit and mind • Harmony with nature • Illness can be prevented by diet, rest and cleanliness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supernatural cause • Spiritual and demons • Punishment from God • Conflict or disharmony in life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Root Doctor • Folk Practitioners (commonly "mother" healer, spiritualist) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore harmony • Prayer or meditation • Herbs, roots, poultices and oils • Religious rituals • Charms, talismans and amulets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerating pain is a sign of strength • Some may express pain
Asian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health is a state of physical and spiritual harmony with nature • Balance of two energy forces: yin(cold) and yang (hot) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imbalance between yin and yang • *Supernatural forces such as God, evil spirits or ancestral spirits • Unhealthy environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herbalist • Physician • Shaman healer (physician-priest) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold remedies if yang is overpowering and hot remedies if yin is overpowering • Herbal remedies • Acupuncture and acupressure • Energy to restore balance between yin and yang 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain must be accepted and endured silently • Displaying pain in public brings disgrace • May refuse pain medication
European	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health can maintained by diet, rest and exercise • Immunizations and preventive practices help maintain health • Good health is a personal responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside sources such as germs, pollutants or contaminants • Punishment for sins • Lack of cleanliness • Self-abuse (drugs, alcohol, tobacco) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physician • Nurse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medications and surgery • Diet and exercise • Home remedies and self-care for mild illnesses • Prayer and religious rituals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some express pain loudly and emotionally • Others value self-control in response to pain • Pain can be helped by medications

Culture	Health Concepts	Cause of Illness	Traditional Healers	Methods of Treatment	Response to Pain
Hispanic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health is a reward from God • Health is good luck • Balance between "hot" and "cold" forces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punishment from God for sins • Susto (fright), malojo (evil eye), or envidia (envy) • Imbalance between hot and cold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native healers (Curandero, Espiritualista, Yerbero, or herbalist, Brujo) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hot and cold remedies to restore balance • Prayers, medals, candles and religious rituals • Herbal remedies, especially teas • Massage • Anointing with oil • Wearing an Azabache (black stone) to ward off the evil eye 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many will express pain verbally and accept treatment • Other feel pain is a part of life and must be endured
Middle Eastern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health is caused by spiritual causes • Cleanliness essential for health • Male individuals dominate and make decisions on health care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual causes • Punishment for sins • Evil spirits or evil "eye" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional healers • Physician 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meditation • Charms and amulets • Medications and surgery • Male health professionals prohibited from touching or examining female patients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerating pain is a sign of strength • Self-inflicted pain is used as a sign of grief
First Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health is harmony between man and nature • Balance among body, mind and spirit • Spiritual powers control body's harmony 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supernatural forces and evil spirits • Violation of a taboo • Imbalance between man and nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medicine Man • Shaman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rituals, charms and masks • Prayer and meditation to restore harmony and nature • Plants and herbs • Medicine bag or bundle filled with herbs and blessed by medicine man 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain is a normal part of life and tolerance of pain signifies strength and power