CULTURAL HUMILITY AND PASTORAL CARE

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In your own work....

- Where have you been taken “off guard” or “surprised”?

- Why do you think those places may have been unsettling, vague, agitating and so forth, for you?

- Did this encounter, or any part of it, remind you of similar encounters or people in the recent or distant past?
**WHAT IS CULTURE?**

Integrated patterns of human behavior that include language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, social or work groups.

Adapted from Cross, T., et al. (1989)
How do we identify ourselves and others?

- Ethnic group, gender
- Communication / language
- Food / eating habits
- Relationships with family and friends
- Sense of self and space
- Time and time consciousness
- Religious affiliation
- Economic class
- Political sympathies
- Work contexts and habits
Dynamic Nature of Culture

- Culture is not a static “trait”
- Is constantly re-created and negotiated
  - Specific social and historical contexts
- Realized from the “bottom up” in everyday interactions with social world
CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

- Too many cultures and traditions to know everything
- Diversity within a “singular” culture
- Individuals may not neatly “fit”

Sensitivity is key
- Listening and attentiveness
- How to act on what we hear and what we know
- Giving dignity and respect to others
- Natural expression of competence
CULTURAL HUMILITY

- A lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique.*

- Does not require mastery of lists of "different" beliefs and behaviors pertaining to certain groups.

- Encourages respectful partnerships through patient-focused interviewing, exploring similarities and differences between his own and each patient's priorities, goals, and capacities.

- Most serious barrier to culturally appropriate care is not a lack of knowledge of the details of any given cultural orientation, but the failure to develop self-awareness and a respectful attitude toward diverse points of view.

IT’S A PROCESS!

Knowledge of:
Diversity, health disparities
cultural competence

Self-reflection on:
values, beliefs
and behaviors

Application to Practice
Cultural Humility in Pastoral Care

- Knowledge, understanding, and skills
  - Related concepts: Cultural sensitivity; cultural awareness
- Ability to provide acceptable and relevant care

- An ongoing process
  - Accepting and respecting differences
  - Aware of personal beliefs
  - Not letting personal beliefs get in the way

- Includes having general as well as specific information
Knowledge of Diversity, Health Disparities and Cultural Competence

Influence of:

- Race, ethnicity, acculturation and socio-economic status on health access & status
- Historical events, current & future demographics
- Health beliefs, social networks, religious and spiritual preferences
- Culture on health literacy and relationship to health behaviors and outcomes
ASPECTS OF CULTURAL ASSESSMENT

- Identity of the individual
  - Degree of acculturation
  - Language preferences

- Psychosocial environment
  - Stressors in the local environment
  - Role of religion
  - Support systems

- Relationship between patient and provider
  - Patient/provider differences in culture/social status
  - Impact upon communication and relationship

- Explanations of illness
  - Predominant idioms of distress
  - Individual or family’s explanatory illness model
SELF-REFLECTION
VALUES, BELIEFS & BEHAVIORS

Awareness of:

- Own spiritual, cultural beliefs & practices and their relationship to others
- The influences of culture, ethnicity, age, socio-demographic characteristics on illness perspectives, health behavior and health care practice
- Impact on interpersonal & professional understanding and behavior
UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS
WESTERN MEDICAL PARADIGM

- Clear understanding of illness, prognosis and treatment options
- Desire to maintain control in the future
- Freedom of choice / human agency
- Willingness to discuss death and dying openly
- Minimized likelihood of “divine intervention”
- Individual, rather than family or social group, as decision-maker
APPLICATION TO PRACTICE

Facilitating skills in:

- Communication and building trust
- Influencing organizational cultural competence
- Building partnerships with diverse communities
- Promotes growth in personal and organizational cultural competence
SOME STUDENT REFLECTIONS:

Cultural humility is the driving force behind learning; it allows us to strip away our preconceived notions and ideals in order to take in a different kind of information....

We must allow ourselves to ...put into practice those things we take in from our humble understanding.

The building blocks—humility and competence—cannot technically be taught, but they can be outlined in a way that makes it easy to appreciate their importance.

Humility: knowing what the right questions are to ask, not just being blind, but knowing to the fullest the information. And constantly inquiring, having a thirst for people. . . . And just committing to a constant process of reflection and critique.
Buddhist Funeral, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Ismaili Muslims on July 4, 2000 in Aswan, Egypt, carry the coffin of the widow of the late Aga Khan III, Begum Om Habibeh, to her final resting place.
AIDS Quilt
Granite Memorials
Military Photo from www.thememoryhole.org/war/coffin_photos/dover/