

Professionalism/Customer Service in the Health Environment

Unit 8
Ethical and Cultural Issues Related to
Communication and Customer Service
Lecture 8b
Cultural Issues

Learning Objectives

- Define culture and diversity
- Describe the primary and secondary dimensions of diversity
- Explain the potential benefits and costs of workforce diversity and how diversity can be leveraged for better performance
- Discuss the role of ethnocentrism and stereotypes in communication
- Explain four major cultural differences and their effect on communication
- Mention the major Equal Employment Opportunity Laws
- Define cultural competency and describe its role in addressing health disparities

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Diversity and Health Care

- The growing importance of diversity
 - Increasing racial/ethnic diversity in the US
- Implications of increasing diversity for
 - Health care organizations
 - Health care professionals
- Our focus will be on racial/ethnic diversity, however diversity is more than race/ethnicity

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Diversity and Cultural Differences

- Diversity refers to cultural differences
- Culture can be viewed as an integrated pattern of learned beliefs and behaviors
- Culture can affect styles of communication, interpersonal relationships, and customs
- Cultural differences arise from people's identification with various groups

Dimensions of Diversity

- Internal (primary) dimensions
 - Inborn differences, such as gender and race
- External (secondary) dimensions
 - Differences acquired during one's lifetime, such as education and religious beliefs

Source: Daft, 2008

Potential Benefits of Workforce Diversity

- Information value of diversity
 - Greater creativity and innovation
 - Improved problem solving and decision making
- Marketing advantage of diversity
 - Improve the organizational responsiveness to cultural differences
 - Appeal to a more diverse clientele

Potential Costs of Workforce Diversity

- Increased diversity can result in greater group conflict, which can lead to:
 - Reduced group cohesiveness
 - Lower team morale
- Cultural differences can result in less effective communication

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Leveraging Diversity

- Diversity can be leveraged to improve performance in the presence of certain leader characteristics and management practices
- How can health professionals improve their effectiveness in diverse work environments?

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Ethnocentrism and Intercultural Relationships

- Ethnocentrism
 - Belief that one's culture is superior to other cultures
 - Can act as a perceptual filter
- Ethnorelativism
 - Belief that all cultural groups are inherently equal
 - Can lead to pluralism where organizations accommodate different cultures

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Stereotypes and Intercultural Communication

- We prefer to interact with others we perceive being most like ourselves
- Stereotypes
 - Are the result of in-group favoritism
 - Are widely held beliefs or assumptions about the characteristics of all members of a cultural group
 - Can affect our perceptions of others since we tend to select cues that reinforce our stereotypes

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Cultural Differences that May Affect Communication

- Sense of self and space
- Individualism verses collectivism
- High versus low context
- Communication patterns

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Cultural Attitudes that May Affect Communication

- Sense of self and space
 - How close we stand to others
 - How or whether we touch
 - The degree of openness we show
 - The degree of formality that we prefer

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Cultural Attitudes that May Affect Communication

- Individualism versus collectivism
 - Individualism
 - Focus on the individual's needs and interests
 - Stress patient autonomy in decision making
 - Collectivism
 - Focus on the group needs and interests
 - Emphasize family involvement in decision making

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Cultural Attitudes that May Affect Communication

- High versus low context cultures
 - High context cultures
 - Emphasis on social context more than explicit words
 - Low context cultures
 - Communication is used to exchange words and information

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Cultural Attitudes that May Affect Communication

- Communication patterns
 - Tone, gestures and facial expressions
 - Eye contact

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Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Laws

- Equal Pay Act of 1963
 - Gender differences in pay
- Civil Rights Act of 1964
 - Race, religion, color, sex, or national origin
- Age Discrimination Act of 1967
 - Restricts mandatory retirement

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Laws

- Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978
 - Be treated as all employees
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)
 - Reasonable accommodations to disabled employees
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Implications of Diversity for Health Care Delivery

- Culture can influence patients' health beliefs, medical practices, attitudes towards medical care, and levels of trust
- Cultural differences can impact how health information is received, understood, and acted upon
- Clinical barriers occur when cultural differences are not adequately addressed
- IOM (2003) report "Unequal Treatment" documented racial/ethnic disparities in care

Cultural Competency

- Cultural competency is an organizational strategy to address cultural differences
- Cultural competency is the “ongoing capacity of healthcare systems, organizations and professionals to provide for diverse patient populations high quality care that is family- and patient-centered and equitable” (National Quality Forum, 2008)

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Key Elements of Cultural Competency

- Ongoing capacity needed for cross-cultural interactions
- High quality care
- Family-centered care
- Patient-centered care
- Equitable care

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Summary

- Increasing workforce and patient diversity is impacting health care delivery
- Diversity is more than race/ethnicity. It includes differences based on gender, age, education, religion, sexual orientation and so forth
- Diversity can be leveraged to maximize the positive aspects of diversity while minimizing the negative aspects

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Summary

- Ethnocentric views and stereotypes can hinder intercultural communication
- Cultural differences such as the emphasis on context or the degree of individualism/collectivism can affect communication
- Cultural competency is an organizational strategy to address cultural differences and reduce health disparities

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