

## Component 16- Professionalism/Customer Service in the Health Environment

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

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## 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

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## 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

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## 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

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## 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

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## 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

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## 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

Source: National Quality Forum (NQF). *A Comprehensive Framework and Preferred Practices for Measuring and Reporting Cultural Competency: A Consensus Report*. Washington, DC: NQF, 2009.

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## 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, 2009)

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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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