

CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE EMERGENCY SETTING

Description

Knowledge of cultural diversity is vital at all levels of nursing practice.¹ Therefore, understanding and awareness of the cultural impact on interactions is essential for nurses, whether they practice in a clinical, educational, research, or administrative setting.¹

Culture is both complex and dynamic.² “It is defined as a way of life of a group of people that includes their beliefs, behavior practices, norms, attitudes, rituals, and customs.”² The patient’s concept of illness, health, and wellness also impacts their belief system. Additionally, emergency nurses bring their own personal cultural heritage, as well as the cultural and philosophical perspective of their education into the health care setting, so it is important to understand that nurse–patient encounters include the interaction of three cultural systems: the culture of the nurse, the culture of the client, and the culture of the setting.¹

Knowledge and skills regarding cultural diversity and its impact on health care delivery can assist emergency nurses to recognize cultural diversity in the emergency setting and practice safe, effective, and respectful care, while advocating for their patients.

ENA Position

It is the position of the Emergency Nurses Association that:

1. The emergency nurse acts with compassion and respect for human dignity and the uniqueness of the individual.³
2. The emergency nurse delivers care in a manner that preserves and protects health care consumer autonomy, dignity, rights, values, and beliefs.⁴
3. The emergency nurse applies a knowledge of cultural diversity to develop and implement culturally sensitive nursing care.¹
4. The emergency nurse recognizes cultural diversity, integrates cultural knowledge, and acts in a culturally appropriate manner when possible.¹
5. The emergency nurse reflects critically on his or her own values, beliefs, and cultural heritage to understand their effect on safe, effective, and respectful care.⁵
6. The emergency nurse advocates for the inclusion of the patient’s cultural beliefs and practices in all dimensions of health care.⁵
7. The emergency nurse is educationally prepared to promote and provide culturally congruent health care.⁵

8. The emergency nurse uses effective, culturally competent communication with clients that takes into consideration the client's verbal and nonverbal language, cultural values and context, and unique health care needs and perceptions.⁵
9. The emergency nurse influences individuals, groups, and systems to achieve outcomes of culturally competent care for diverse populations.⁵
10. The emergency nurse bases practice on interventions that have been systematically tested and demonstrated to be most effective for the culturally diverse populations served and investigates and tests interventions in areas where there is a lack of evidence.⁵

Background

As the United States becomes more ethnically and racially diverse, health care systems and providers can improve access to care and respond to an increasingly heterogeneous patient base by providing culturally relevant, responsive services.¹ Health care organizations face challenges to accommodate increasingly diverse patient populations. Language access remains a matter of national importance. Effective communication is a critical aspect of safe, quality patient care.⁶

Cultural competence is a defined set of policies, behaviors, attitudes, and practices that enable individuals and organizations to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.⁷ Cultural competence is the ability of systems to provide care to patients with diverse values, beliefs, and behaviors, including the tailoring of delivery to meet patients' social, cultural, and linguistic needs. The process of achieving organizational cross-cultural competence is not a short-term commitment and requires a well-planned and sustained integrated multicultural approach. That approach includes, but is not limited to, leadership commitment and involvement; mission, vision, goals, and policies that define, support, communicate, and advocate for cultural diversity; and educational, financial, and research responsibilities.^{1,7}

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