

Education Update

Trinitas Regional Medical Center Education Department

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Understanding Cultural Diversity ~ Understanding Ourselves

What is Culture?

Culture is a shared system of values, beliefs and attitudes that shape and influence behaviors of a particular group of people. It includes language, beliefs, customs, rituals and ceremonies. Culture determines how we look (hair color, skin color, appearance), what we eat, how we think and view the world around us, the language we speak and our religious or spiritual beliefs. Our culture also influences our health practices as well as the way we respond to illness, injury and pain.

Who is "Right"? In order to understand others, we must first take a look at our own cultural backgrounds. It is important to remember that although our beliefs may be *different* from the beliefs of others, they are not necessarily the "right" beliefs. In a nations that is the most ethnically diverse in the world, there is no such thing as normal or right, there is only different.

What's in a Name? Address every Trinitas customer/patient with dignity and respect. If you are unsure how to address the customer/patient, ask what is there preference. Always use Mr. or Mrs., unless given permission to use the first name. Never use words such as Honey or Sweetie when talking to our customers, especially the elderly, no matter what the cultural background of the individual.



What Makes People Unique?

- Appearance
- Religious views
- Sexual orientation
- Physical/mental abilities
- Life Experiences
- Educational background

Consider:

- Country of origin
- Preferred language
- Views of health and illness
- Family and community relationships
- Food preferences

Never Stereotype!

Everyone is different, even within their own culture.

What Can You Do?

Listen with sympathy and understanding. Be open-minded and respectful towards their beliefs, values and practices.

Encourage an open dialogue between patients, family members and the health care team.

Awareness of language and communication issues can help bridge the patient's and healthcare provider's views on health. Ask questions of patients and family members.

Recognize the role that others play in a patient's care and involve them as much as possible

Negotiate agreement. It is important to understand the patient's views on illness and disease so that treatment fits in their cultural framework. Incorporate the patient's views whenever possible.