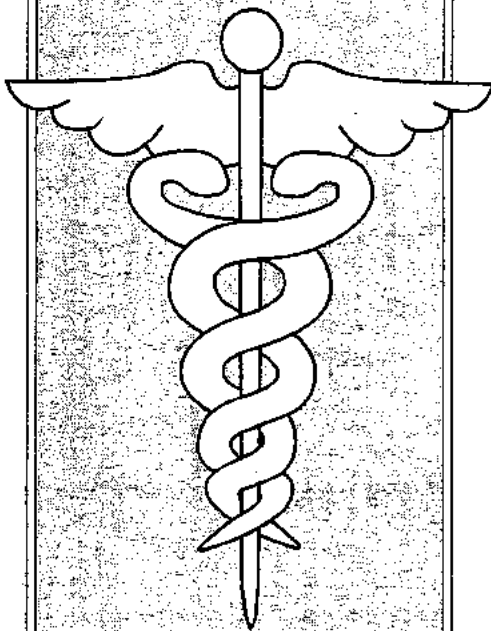


**Long Term Care
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Cultural Diversity

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LONG TERM CARE NETWORK

presenter:

Susan M. Frey

Activity Manager

White Mountain Regional Medical Center

Springerville, Arizona

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CULTURAL DIVERSITY

CULTURE

Culture is composed of many different characteristics and identifiers that help nursing assistants identify residents' needs. Culture can include, but is not limited, to:

- ❖ family structure.
- ❖ the roles of individual family members.
- ❖ rules of interpersonal interaction.
- ❖ rules of decorum and discipline.
- ❖ religious beliefs.
- ❖ standards for health and hygiene.
- ❖ food preferences.
- ❖ dress and personal history.
- ❖ history and traditions.
- ❖ holidays and celebrations.
- ❖ perceptions of work and play.
- ❖ life expectations and aspirations.

FAMILY STRUCTURE

Knowledge of a resident's family structure can help a nursing assistant identify the role a resident has played throughout his or her life. Some family structures represent a patriarchal system, in which the man is the head of the household. In this family structure, the man makes all decisions affecting family members and power descends through his family. In other structures, decision-making is a joint effort where both parents contribute equally.

INDIVIDUAL ROLES

A look at individual member's roles provides an understanding of how different cultures view individual members. In many religious-based cultures, religious leaders are held in high esteem. Other cultures hold a special place for elders

because they satisfy the need for educators. Many cultures believe that by virtue of age, elderly individuals are qualified to solve many problems.

Men and women have different roles in many cultures. With this knowledge, it is possible to understand the responses of individual residents to situations involving members of the opposite sex. For example, a male resident may become upset when seated next to a female in the dining area because in his culture, females sit at a table apart from the males. Understanding this, a nursing assistant can take action to make both residents more comfortable.

INTERPERSONAL INTERACTION

Rules of interpersonal interaction involve relations of different members of a family or tribe. Some Native American cultures forbid a son-in-law from looking at his mother-in-law; they are not allowed to be in the same room. And, some Hispanic wives are taught that their husband is the one to manage all outside duties, including financial, social, religious, and work-related projects. In addition, many cultures have definite roles for men and women.

DECORUM AND DISCIPLINE

Recognizing and honoring the rules of decorum and discipline are important when dealing with residents. Many cultures strongly believe that gossip is taboo. The principle of confidentiality is not taken lightly by older generations. Nursing assistants may have to earn a resident's trust and pass many "tests" before being accepted. A breach of confidence often negatively affects a relationship with a resident.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Today, religious practices are not as strict or formal as in the past. An example of a change in religious practice involves the Roman Catholic church service. A resident 60 or older attended church with a head covering, gloves, and her best proper attire in her youth. In addition, she knelt in front of an altar at some point during the service. Today, it is acceptable to attend church in casual clothing, without covering the head or wearing gloves. Mass is rarely read in Latin. In some churches, members listen to nontraditional guitar music, and hugs and handshakes occur during a solemn religious ceremony.

Awareness of a resident's religious beliefs can enhance a nursing assistant's relationship with that resident. Awareness can include knowing that a resident prays before meals or simply knowing and respecting a resident's religious background. Many residents enjoy discussing their beliefs with someone who respects their individuality.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Standards for health and hygiene vary among cultures and individuals. Remember not to judge what is standard or substandard, and to recognize that many cultural differences exist in this area. These differences affect how a resident adjusts to long term care placement. Communal living is common in a few cultures, but requires great adjustment in others.

Standards of health and hygiene also vary – from how a resident chooses to maintain his or her living space to how often to bathe. Consider these differences when assisting a resident with ADLs.

FOOD PREFERENCES

Exploring cultural food preferences is an activity many residents participate in eagerly. Asking residents about their favorite meals and the preparation of these foods can be an enjoyable experience for all. Prepare these dishes and allow residents to taste different foods to increase

everyone's experience with other cultures. Some residents prefer to eat only familiar foods.

DRESS AND PERSONAL APPEARANCE

It is important to note that many cultures and religions have dress requirements that are important to individuals. Dressing residents in an appropriate manner involves dressing them in their preferred clothing and style. This simple act demonstrates care. Dignity is the greatest gift a nursing assistant can bestow on residents.

HISTORY AND TRADITIONS

History and traditions enable caregivers to make special days and events available to residents. Almost all cultures and religions commemorate special days during the year. For example, Hispanics have historical and religious days, such as Cinco de Mayo and saint recognition days, which are celebrated throughout the year.

Celebrating the history and traditions of other cultures provides residents of different cultures a bridge for contact with one another. Also, when a resident's culture is recognized and celebrated, that resident feels more comfortable and accepted.

HOLIDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

Holidays and celebrations are observed for many reasons. Rural cultures that depend on the weather for their livelihood often celebrate rain, sun, harvests, and thanks. Many Native American tribes hold ceremonies for all activities, believing that not holding a ceremony dooms their efforts to failure.

EDUCATION

Education and teaching methods vary among cultures. At one time, some cultures did not send their children to school, and education became the responsibility of elder family members. Elders taught academics and religion.

WORK AND PLAY

Perceptions of work and play help determine why residents do not attend group activities. To some residents life was all work and their play

activity was what you or I would call work. Life expectations and aspirations are the key to finding out what residents hoped to accomplish in their lifetimes. Finding out if they have any goals that they wanted to reach and have not, as yet, can lead to a fulfilling activity goal.

IDENTIFYING CULTURAL NEEDS

SOCIAL SERVICE

A social service director interviews the family and resident upon admission. An activity director also performs a comprehensive assessment after a resident adjusts to the new surroundings. These documents can help a nursing assistant find topics for discussion with a resident.

BIRTH DATE

Sometimes, knowing a resident's birth date, memories, or information about his or her formative years opens doors to enjoyable activities for everyone. Reference books provide information about music preferences, dress, hairstyles, news stories, and many important facts about the years in which a resident grew up. Caregivers can gain a better view of the cultural experiences for that time.

FAMILY INTERVIEW

Interviewing family members who visit a resident is a way to gain information about a cognitively-impaired resident. Family members know a resident's background and can help when deciding his or her current needs.

RESIDENT INTERVIEW

Quality listening activities can be incorporated while assisting a resident with the activities of daily living. Simple questions presented as interest and not prying can be asked as a routine part of this procedure. Building trust is crucial to maintaining a positive relationship with residents.

DOCUMENTING NEEDS

The primary documentation source for discoveries about a resident is the nursing assistants' notes. However, make the charge nurse aware of any resident needs. The interdisciplinary care plan team can then be informed of these needs, and approaches to fulfill them can be added to a resident's care plan. A daily report forum is another way to reach more staff about changes in a resident's status. It is essential that all medical staff are provided with this new information to meet residents' cultural needs.

WHAT IS AN ACTIVITY?

An activity is not always a scheduled activity program the activity department puts on the calendar for groups and individuals. Activities also include the activities of daily living, especially if an activity meets cultural needs and helps residents maintain a high standard of living.

Appearing in a public situation appropriately attired and groomed is important to most residents. Even residents with Alzheimer's disease fidget with their clothes when not in their usual clothing. Cognitively-impaired residents need the structure of routine in all their activities. They often have no sense of today, but identify with the security of the remembered in the past.

SOCIALIZATION

Using ADL time to socialize and build a trusting relationship with residents minimizes behavioral problems. This faith that residents develop must not be taken lightly.

Having a friendly and happy atmosphere where residents are encouraged to socialize and interact with staff and take part in the daily routine also provides an activity for residents. Individual activities in which a resident participates enhance the quality of life and are important pieces of a total activity program.

CULTURAL GUIDELINES

Some cultural guidelines that can assist nursing assistants in building successful relationships with residents include:

- ❖ doing an activity with a resident instead of performing the activity for the resident.
- ❖ walking beside a resident instead of leading.
- ❖ assisting a resident with an activity instead of controlling an activity.
- ❖ providing input.
- ❖ showing respect instead of condescension.
- ❖ expressing concern instead of patronizing.
- ❖ listening to what a resident says instead of doing all the talking.

Review these guidelines frequently to maintain a positive, successful relationship with residents.

PROGRAM ADAPTATIONS

An activity department is always grateful for insight into what a resident needs to increase meaning in his or her life. The department adapts programs to fit most residents' needs and attempts to expand the programs with cultural experiences. Altering activities in small ways can make them more inclusive of all residents' cultures. Following are some examples of activities altered to accommodate residents' various needs.

MEALS

At a care plan meeting, the team attempted to think of approaches to solve the problem of a Navajo resident who refused to eat. Her daughter, present at the meeting, stated that at home, her mother ate blue corn meal mush, a traditional staple served in Navajo homes 3 times a day.

Serving blue corn meal mush was discussed with the dietary manager, who said she could purchase blue corn meal from a supplier and was happy to prepare it for all this resident's meals.

Three months later, the care plan team felt happy and a little smug that the resident did not lose more weight, but gained 2 pounds. Her daughter translated to her how glad we were she was now eating. The daughter started laughing when her mother spoke. We waited for a translation.

Her daughter relayed that blue corn meal mush, a traditional meal, should have been prepared over an open fire, with a specific wood, facing a specific direction, and eaten at a certain time. We asked the resident why she ate the meal after it was boiled in a kitchen pot. She told her daughter that after these nice white people had gone to so much trouble for her, it would have been rude not to eat it. This episode is a key to the real meaning of culture and understanding cultural differences.

GROUP PARTICIPATION

One resident refused to participate in any scheduled activity programs and exhibited signs of agitation and restlessness. In a one-on-one session, the activity director discovered the resident had been a mailman for 52 years, with perfect attendance. This information astonished the staff, who spent many hours developing programs to honor him. He was even asked to share this accomplishment and answer questions at a staff meeting concerning attendance, a major concern at many long term care facilities.

MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES

A former CPA sitting in a central area where staff and residents frequently pass can count the number of positive interactions, smiles, nods, greetings, or short conversations. This information could be passed on at an inservice.

Another way to involve residents in activities is to relate different activities they enjoyed before entering long term care. For example, a

resident who formerly handled maintenance activities can look for maintenance tasks, such as gum on handrails, paint needing repair, loose tiles, equipment not stored properly, or safety hazards that need immediate attention. Or, a resident who was once a judge could be on the resident council to assist in hearing and settling disputes.

SUMMARY

Recognizing and accepting the cultural diversity in a long term care community can enhance the quality of residents' lives and the care they receive. Nursing assistants can help promote cultural understanding by expressing interest in residents' cultures and individual lifestyles.

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