Understanding Islamic Beliefs and Customs Related to Advanced Illness and End of Life Care

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Disclosures

Moe Rustom and Christine Westphal have no real or perceived conflicts of interest that relate to this presentation.

Objectives

1. Identify Islamic principles, pillars, sects and geographical distribution.
2. Describe Islamic beliefs related to advanced illness, decision making, and end of life care.
3. Discuss culturally congruent nursing care practices for end of life care that will demonstrate respect of beliefs and practices.
A Tale of Two Patients

Melissa Haddad
Medical Interpreter

Melissa (a very caring & dedicated nurse)

Mr. Jones: The best ever nurse, kind, courteous, caring and respectful.

- She made me feel very close.
- She called me by my first name.
- She sat by my side, held my hand, and talked to me gently.
- She talked about her family and asked me about mine.

Mr. Abdul: The worst experience ever, made him feel uncomfortable, she was disrespectful and insensitive.

- She was disrespectful, calling me by my first name, very inappropriate since she is not a family member.
- She kept touching me and holding my hand and that made me feel uncomfortable since she is a female.
- She kept talking about her family and asking about mine, this was inappropriate since this is very personal information.

The key is to provide patients with the same quality care as everyone else... equal quality, or equity, rather than equality.

• “It is much more important to know what sort of a patient has a disease than what sort of a disease a patient has”
  • (Sir William Osler, 1st Baronet (July 12, 1849 – December 29, 1919) )

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If a person identifies as a member of a racial, ethnic, religious or demographic community, it DOES NOT mean they value the entire cultural perspective.

ASK.

Islam

- The word *Islam* means "submission," or the total surrender of oneself to God (Arabic: ﷲ, Allāh).
  - Islam is a way of life, social, economic, spiritual, and political
    - Dependence on God
    - Feeling of dependency on God
    - Fear of God's punishment on earth
    - Respect for tradition and for the past
    - Politeness for all and generosity

- Optional: The presentation will pause when you click on the buttons below to access web pages with more information on God and Allah. Click the play button at the bottom-left to resume.
**Principles**

- Monotheism
  - Why do Muslims use the word 'Allah' for God?
- Belief in prophets, Abrahamic.
- Divine Books, Quran.
- Quran is viewed as the actual words of "Allah" as spoken to his prophet Mohammad.
- Resurrection and Judgment.

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**The 5 Pillars of Islam**

1. Belief in one God and Mohammad as one of His prophets (Shahada)
2. Daily prayer (Salat)
3. Fasting (Sawm)
4. Pilgrimage (Hajj)
5. Alms (Zakat)

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**Salat (Prayer)**

- 5 times a day oriented towards Mecca preceded by ablution (Washing)
  - Fajr (before dawn)
  - Zuhr (noon)
  - Asr (afternoon)
  - Maghrib (after sunset)
  - Isha’ (night)
- Illness & Salat
Sawm (Fasting)

- Abstinence from eating and drinking from before sunrise to after sunset
- Obligatory during the whole month of Ramadan
- Missed days of fasting, have to be made up following Ramadan
- Followed by Eid Al Fitr Holiday culminated by charity work
- Implications for medication regimen

Hajj

- Pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia
- Once in a person’s lifetime if physically and financially able
- About 3-4 million Muslims perform Hajj every year at the same time
- Followed by Eid Al Adha Holiday

Shari’a (Rules and Legislation)

- Quran, has final word in a Muslim’s life
- Hadith, teaching of Prophet Mohammad
- Religious Edicts, gatherings from religious scholars, tackle ever changing ethical challenges

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Sects

Main branches
• Sunni Muslims 80-90%
• Shia Muslims 10-13%
  (Iran, Pakistan, India, Iraq, Bahrain, and Lebanon)
• Druze and others 1-2%

Source: The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life

Muslim Leadership

• Depending on the school of thought, Muslims might not have a single religious leader.

• Heterogeneous

Preserving Modesty

• Modesty is one of the core values which is expressed by both genders.
• Women wear hijab as a form of modesty.
• Privacy for women is a dominant societal function.
  o Knock and wait
  o Women and handshake
  o Same gender providers preferred
  o Privacy and female exposure
Halal/Haram

- The word Halal means “lawful/permitted”
- The word Haram means “unlawful/prohibited”
- These two words govern many of a Muslim actions in life

World Muslim Population

Where Muslims live

Nearly one in five people worldwide is Muslim, or about 1.6 billion people, percent of country's population that is Muslim:

- 9-10%
- 10-40%
- 40-100%

Largest Muslim populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Muslims, in millions</th>
<th>Percent Muslim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>74</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
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<td>29</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most Muslims live in Southern and Southeastern Asia, not in the Middle and North Africa, where Islam originated.

World Muslim Population

- 1 out of 4 People in the world is a Muslim
- Muslims live in 232 countries and territories

* Source: Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life
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Cultural Variations

• Autonomy
• Decision making and communication
• Family values
• Time
• Health beliefs
• Death and dying

Autonomy

• Individualism while important is not paramount as in the west
• Much greater value of “connectedness” to family and community

Body Language

STOP
HELLO
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

- If family members are LEP, an interpreter can help with the following:
  
  - Cultural brokering
  - Explaining family dynamics
  - Explain medical terminology efficiently
  - Very insightful in stressful situations
  - Bilingual liaison with community
  - Bilingual materials
  - Using them is a sign of respect and concern

Decision Making

- Decision making is viewed as a family decision

- Male authority
  - Legal signatures
  - Consents

- 1st and 2nd generation views of end life

- Advance directives

- Attributing the occurrence of disease to the will of Allah, has many implications on decision making

Withdrawal/Withholding

is controversial among scholars.

- Removal of mechanical ventilatory support is not universally agreed upon.

- If the family is divided seek the help of their Imam.

- Carrying a burden or committing a sin.
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Family Values
- Respect of elder family members
  - Sparing the feelings of older family members
  - Hope: Disclosure of terminal diagnosis
  - Visitation of extended family members
  - High reverence to Mother’s status

Home Visits
- Ask about taking shoes off
- Time the visit between prayer times
- Knock and wait
- Assess English status before going
- Hands-on family involvement
- Hospitality

Time
- Time is not linear and not constricted
- Lateness is accepted and anger about it is not understood
- Insha’Allah (if God willing)
  - “not tomorrow at 10:20am” but rather “I’ll see you before lunch”
Health Beliefs

- God/Allah is the healer
- Prayer is a form of treatment
- In some sects, Imam might write a treatment shield “Hijab”
- Suffering at end of life might be accepted as a form of atonement
- Doubt effectiveness of pills and medicine
- Herbal is preferred over chemical
- Belief in unseen forces: Jinn and evil eyes

Death and Dying

- If death is imminent:
  - Bed may be turned toward Mecca (to the northeast in the U.S.).
  - Quran recitation might be played or read by the family.
  - Expect family members to take over care of the patient as it is considered a religious duty.
  - Always ask what the family would like you to do.

Organ & Tissue Donation

- "Whosoever saves the life of one person it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind."
  *Holy Qur’an, chapter 5 vs. 32*
After Death
- Burial is expected within 24 hours before the next sunset.
- After death, the expectation is that the body remains untouched.
- Defer to the family about caring for the body.
- Expect grieving and wailing to happen at the bedside and might be very demonstrative.
- The expectation is to move the body to the mosque for further care.

Expectations During Mosque Visitation
- Are usually viewed as a highly appreciated gesture.
- Families and close relatives usually sit facing the audience and next to where the body is.
- Visitors are expected to walk up and shake hands with the family stating simply “Sorry for your loss”, males go to male section, females go to female section.
- Female bodies are prohibited from display and the casket is usually closed except to other females.

Funeral Mosque Etiquette
- Dress is conservative, heads and legs covered, and is usually black.
- Upon entering, genders are seated separately.
- Funerals occur in designated halls for receiving large numbers of visitors, which are separate from the praying area, and usually occurs within 24 hours of death.
- There maybe a memorial ceremony that might happen in a few days later.
**Bereavement Support**

- Bereavement support is seen in the form of community support.
- Do not be offended if family does not accept hospice family bereavement support.

**Conclusion**

- Assess religious practices and the culture
- When in doubt, always ask
- Seek specific cultural variations that the family might follow

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REFERENCES