

CULTURE DIVERSITY in MH and Healthcare

Cultural competence, responding to diversity and inclusion, are important practices for healthcare professionals. This course will help you to gain an awareness of bias and provide strategies to adjust your clinical mindset and therapeutic approach to adapt to “the other” – people who differ in color, creed, sexual identification, socio-economic status, or other differences that make inclusion difficult.

Inclusion is defined as “the state of being included” or “the act of including,” which is something all clinicians should strive for. This course is designed to provoke thought about culture, diversity, and inclusion. Even though research for evidence-based practice is somewhat limited in this area, the concept of cultural competency (however it is defined and measured) is a key skill for healthcare professionals to create an inclusive therapeutic environment.

Cultural competency is more than speaking another language. It means being aware of and responding to the sensibilities of patients whose cultures and values may be very different from your own.

What is Cultural Competency?

Cultural competency refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures.

What Can Culture Affect?

Description and communication of symptoms

Perceived causes of illness; understanding of infection, transmission, and contacts

Health-seeking behavior

Understanding of disease process, treatment expectations, and decision making

Interaction with the health care system and health care professionals

Attitudes towards helpers and authorities; reluctance to reveal contacts

How a person identifies and describes their contacts

Ask Questions to Get to Know the Individual Case

How do you prefer to be addressed?

Where were you born?

How long have you been in the U.S.?

Are you more comfortable reading information in your native language or in English?

How are important healthcare decisions made in your family?

Are there certain health care procedures and tests that your culture prohibits?

Four Elements for Cross-Cultural Communication

1. Awareness of one's own cultural values: Are you attentive to your own preconceived notions of other cultural groups?

2. Awareness and acceptance of cultural differences: Do you look for opportunities to meet and interact with individuals who are from cultures other than your own?

3. Development of cultural knowledge: Are you familiar with the worldviews of cultural groups other than your own?

4. Ability to adapt to the cultural context of the case: Do you know how to navigate cross-cultural interactions?

Naming Systems

Different cultures have different naming systems – First, middle, last? –

Two last names? – Family name first?

Ask for all names, nicknames, aliases

Make sure forms and registry can accommodate

Have the case agree to always use the same name