



Hispanic Foodways designs culturally innovative, patient-focused, health and diabetes education programs and patient education tools

Best Culturally Competent Communication Tools

Culture defines¹

- what is considered to be a health problem and who should provide treatment
- how symptoms and concerns are expressed
- what type of treatments should be given

What does your patient consider a health problem?

Nothing illustrates the point better than when I accompanied my late aunt to a doctor's consultation. He told her that her total cholesterol level was slightly elevated and made a recommendation to "watch her fat intake." Without expressing even the slightest concern to his admonishment, she asked, "What about my iron levels? Am I anemic?" he replied, "No. You are not anemic." Raising her hands while lifting her head she replied, "Thank God!" My late aunt, born and raised in Colombia in an era when anemia, not high cholesterol was the scourge du jour, was not attuned to the health related effects of hypercholesterolemia.

COUNSELING TIPS

- Assess the patient's level of importance concerning health issues such as anemia, malnutrition, diabetes, heart disease.
 - "What are the health conditions/diseases that concern you the most?" "Can you rate them in the level of importance to you?" "What have you heard about diabetes, hypertension, etc?"
- Help the patients "connect the dots" - Explain why lowering saturated fat may improve cardiovascular clinical markers and how that may translate into better health outcomes.

¹ <http://www.omhrc.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=11> Accessed October 28,2007

What does your patient consider the most effective (and expected) treatment?

- Inquire about what treatment method is perceived as most effective for the patient. In certain cases, injections might be perceived as more effective than pills².
- “What do you think is the best way to treat diabetes, pills, injections, home remedies, specific foods, etc.?”

What is an Effective Culturally Competent Communication Tool?

The **E.T.H.N.I.C.**³ model can be effective in identifying

- Patient’s explanation of illness
- Treatment practices accepted in the patient’s culture.

The **E.T.H.N.I.C.** model can also help

- Negotiate treatment options
- Determine the appropriate intervention
- Collaborate with patients and family members

COUNSELING Tips using the E.T.H.N.I.C. model

■ Explanation

- What do you think may be the reason you have these symptoms?
- Do you know anyone else who has this condition and how is treated?

² •Goyan Kittler, P. and Sucher, KP. 2004. Food and Culture 4th Edition. California: Wadsworth.

³ © 1997 Developed by: Steven J. Levin, MD Robert C. Like, MD, MS Jan E. Gottlieb, MPH Center for Healthy Families and Cultural Diversity Department of Family Medicine UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

■ Treatment

- What kinds of medicines, home remedies, or other treatments have you tried for this illness?
- Is there anything you eat, drink, or do (or avoid) on a regular basis to stay healthy?
- Are there any foods you eat to treat this condition?
- How do you prepare them and how often do you eat them?

■ Healers

- Have you sought any advice from alternative/folk healers, friends, or other people (non-doctors)? Tell me.

■ Negotiate

- Negotiate options that are mutually acceptable and do not contradict, but incorporate, your patient's beliefs.
- What changes do you expect from this treatment?
- May I give you some recommendations to follow?

■ Intervention

- Tell me how you feel about the treatment plan. What part of the treatment plan seems reasonable to you? Which part might pose some difficulties? Why?

■ Collaboration

- Let me suggest how your family/friends may be able to help you with the treatment



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