

So, We're Culturally Competent... Now what?

A Community Cradle Program

“The Role of the Interpreter as Culture Broker”
presented by MAMI Interpreters



Culture & Language

Cultural awareness is a two-way street.

- ◆ The native culture
 - ◆ Cultural practices
 - ◆ Concepts of time
 - ◆ Who is the decisionmaker
 - ◆ Use of faith healers
 - ◆ Concepts of illness and how to treat them - the evil eye
 - ◆ Gestures

OK?

- ◆ US & UK= O.K.
- ◆ Japan= money
- ◆ Brazil=insult
- ◆ Russian= zero



Come over?

- 🟢 US = come over
- 🟢 China, Taiwan, Singapore= signify death
- 🟢 Japan, Philippine=rude, insult



Culture & Language

Cultural awareness is a two-way street.

- ◆ The culture of the new land
 - ◆ In every day living – how to use a can opener, recycling, taking a bus ...
 - ◆ Health care setting
 - ◆ Medication – Take two teaspoons...
 - ◆ Insurance
 - ◆ Procedures
 - ◆ Treatments
 - ◆ The health care system – hospital, doctor's office, clinic, physical therapy, occupational therapy ...

How Do Language and Culture Intersect?

- ◆ Language: a body of words ... common to a people who are of the same community or nation, the same geographical area, or the same cultural tradition (dictionary.reference.com)
- ◆ Language and culture are intertwined. You only understand a word based on your cultural experience.

“Family”

- Small nuclear group (US)
- Extended family plus all one's friends (Chinese)



Domestic Violence

- ◆ A crime, a health & welfare issue (English-US) – remove the victim
- ◆ An inevitable fact of marriage to be endured – esp. by wives – you live with it.
(Russia, Yemen)



The Role of the Interpreter as Culture Broker

- ◆ Your voice. He/she sees with your eyes. Is sensitive to your cultural background.
- ◆ The refugee's/immigrant's voice. Sees with his/her eyes. Is sensitive to his/her cultural background.

How the Interpreter Works

- ◆ Trained to be sensitive to language issues, visual cues, cultural bumps
 - ◆ Smile or nod
 - ◆ does it mean “yes,” “I agree.” “I understand.”
 - ◆ Or is it a polite gesture. A gesture of deference to the provider’s wisdom or power?

As interpreter, he/she will stop and ask for clarification to ensure that both sides understand. He/she is the “conduit” of information and culture.

Cultural Issues

- ◆ Handling of age
- ◆ Handling of gender
- ◆ Gestures
- ◆ Eye contract
- ◆ Silence
- ◆ Politeness
- ◆ Concept of time
- ◆ Religion
- ◆ Handling of sexual issues
- ◆ Treatment of death & illness
- ◆ Children & discipline
- ◆ Decision making

The Ethics of the Medical Interpreter

- ◆ Accuracy & completeness: adds nothing, changes nothing, deletes nothing. Faithful to meaning:
 - ◆ Je suis pleine.
 - ◆ Do you have heartburn often? – brociura di stomaco/acidez
- ◆ Culture broker: “as interpreter...”
- ◆ Advocate: only when necessary and appropriate
- ◆ Other ethics: confidentiality, impartiality, respect, professional development, professionalism, respects role boundaries

How to Work With a Medical Interpreter

- ◆ Speak directly to patient. Look at the client rather than the interpreter. It is important to build the relationship and trust between you and the patient.
- ◆ Speak simply, slowly, and clearly (clear jargon-free language). Pause often.
- ◆ Say nothing you would not want interpreted to all present in the room. Avoid “side-bar” conversations with interpreter.
- ◆ Be sensitive to nonverbal cues. Ask the patient through the interpreter if you suspect that there is a cultural issue.

How to Work With the Medical Interpreter

- ◆ Let interpreter help if cultural issues cause a misunderstanding.
- ◆ Remember that, if necessary, the interpreter can write out instructions in the client's native language. Show the patient how to take a medication, don't just explain it.
- ◆ If patient is literate in her native language, make use of translated written materials.

How to Work With the Medical Interpreter

- ◆ Ask the interpreter to do a sight translation of written documents. If the document is very long or very complex, summarize the document so interpreter can interpret your summary.
- ◆ If you are aware of special circumstances, consider holding a Pre-session to alert interpreter to challenges like: client is psychotic and speaking strangely, client is a victim of trauma; if there is a highly-emotional situation, or if there are cultural issues requiring advance preparation (for example, family role in important decisions).

Use the Interpreter to Help You Get an Accurate Health History

The ETHNIC Model

erc.msh.org

- ◆ An accurate health history is dependent on having a clear understanding of the patient's symptoms and perception of illness. It is more difficult when the patient does not feel comfortable telling the provider about some aspect of his or her medical condition or lifestyle.
 - ◆ Sexual taboos.
- ◆ ETHNIC can create an environment in which the patient is more likely to discuss the situation openly and honestly from his or her own cultural perspective.

The ETHNIC Model

- ◆ **E: *Explanation***

What do you think may be the reason you have these symptoms? What most concerns you about the problem?

- ◆ **T: *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? Tell me about it. What kind of treatment are you seeking from me?

The ETHNIC Model

- ◆ **H: *Healers***

Have you sought any advice from alternative/traditional or folk healers, friends, or other people (non-doctors) for help with your problems? Tell me about it.

- ◆ **N: *Negotiate***

Negotiate options that will be mutually acceptable to you and your patient and that do not contradict, but rather incorporate, your patient's beliefs.

The ETHNIC Model

- ◆ **I: *Intervention***

Determine an intervention with your patient. This may include incorporation of alternative treatments, spirituality, and healers, as well as other cultural practices (e.g., foods eaten or avoided both in general and when sick).

- ◆ **C: *Collaboration***

Collaborate with the patient, family members, other health care team members, healers, and community resources.

The ETHNIC Model

- ◆ Ask the questions in a friendly, relaxed way
- ◆ Listen carefully to the responses
- ◆ Probe more deeply when the responses are unclear
- ◆ Refrain from asking questions when the patient's body language, tone of voice, or facial expression indicates tiredness, discomfort, or resistance.

Cultural competence combined with a competent interpreter will result in...

- ◆ A more trusting relationship
- ◆ Improved communication and understanding
- ◆ Validation of the patient's concerns
- ◆ Increased compliance to provider's recommendations
- ◆ Improved outcomes
- ◆ Fewer errors in diagnosis and treatment

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- ◆ Thank you.
- ◆ Gracias.
- ◆ Merci.
- ◆ Grazie.
- ◆ 𐄂

Thank you
Danke
Xie xie
Khawp khun
Yum botio
Mahalo
Salamat
Juspa
Gracia
Obrigada
Spacibo
Arigato