Mexican American Culture

When caring for a Mexican American patient, nurses and other healthcare personnel should be aware of cultural differences, in an effort to provide the highest level of culturally competent care. In this culture, prolonged or frequent eye contact should be avoided, as members of this culture believe that repeated looking/staring at an individual, without physically touching them, could cause illness or injury. This concept is known as mal ojo, or evil eye. Mexican Americans may also prefer to seek the help of folk healers, or curanderos/as, when they are ill. Folk healers may use herbs, prayers, and rituals to heal the sick or afflicted, based on the theory of hot-cold illness. Healthcare workers should also be aware that when experiencing grief, members of this culture may outwardly and openly express their sadness, and the whole family is typically involved in making decisions about an individual’s care. Keep in mind, members of the Mexican American culture are less likely to be in favor of organ donation due to concerns regarding the religious acceptance of the practice.



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May Avoid Eye Contact with Authoritative Figures

Avoid-sign over Eyes of Authoritative Doctor

In Mexican American culture, it is believed that prolonged, or repeated looking/staring at an individual without physically touching them, could cause illness or injury. This concept is known as mal ojo, or evil eye. Infants and children are believed to be the most susceptible.

Family Involved in Decisions

Family Making D-decision

Mexican Americans greatly value the concept of family. For this reason, many family members may be present when a loved one is in the hospital. The whole family is typically involved in making decisions about an individual’s care.

Emotional Bereavement

Emoticon Bee-wreath

When experiencing grief, members of this culture may outwardly and openly express their sadness. Grieving the loss of a loved one is highly encouraged in this culture.

No Organ Donation

No-sign Organ Charity

Members of the Mexican American culture are less likely to be in favor of organ donation due to concerns regarding the religious acceptance of the practice. Patients and their families should be educated about the topic in their preferred language so they can make an informed decision about organ donation and to clarify any myths or misunderstandings.

Curandero (Curandera)

Corn-doctor Curandero

Curanderos/as are folk healers that use herbs, prayers, and rituals to heal the sick or afflicted. These individuals are known to practice "white" magic.

Hot-Cold Theory of Illness

Fire-and-Ice Theory of Ill-person

In this culture, illnesses are considered either 'hot' or 'cold.' Curanderos/as, or folk healers, rely on this classification of illnesses to choose the appropriate treatment that will restore balance to the affected person.

Abdominal Binder after Pregnancy

Abdominal Binder after giving Birth

Mexican American women may use a 'faja,' or girdle, after giving birth. This device is believed to bring the muscles of the abdomen back together after pregnancy while also aiding in postpartum weight loss.

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