

CULTURALLY SENSITIVE PRACTICE

NESB Young People

Some important points to consider when treating young people from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB):

- Be sensitive to cultural influences operating in an adolescent's life and the diversity of ethnic, language and social backgrounds within any given culture
- Avoid cultural stereotyping – do not assume that people from a particular cultural or language background share the same set of cultural attributes, beliefs and practices
- NESB young people may have had experiences that adversely affect their health, development, and their identity – e.g. migration; refugee experience; exposure to war and trauma; language difficulties; discrimination; racism; conflict of expectations between the 'new' and the 'old' cultures
- Consider how the patient's life experience, ethnicity or religious beliefs are relevant in the case presentation, diagnosis and management
- The most important source of cultural information is the patient themselves – enquire about the adolescent's cultural background, family history, and how *they* define their cultural identity

Culturally Appropriate Consultation

- Treat each patient as an *individual* first within the context of their cultural background – ask about their cultural beliefs, health practices, and family history
- Enquire about beliefs within their culture of origin regarding their illness/symptoms, its cause and management
- Check their understanding of the diagnosis and treatment instructions
- Where language is an issue – it is important to check out whether the young person/parents have clearly understood the questions/information given to them
- Be sensitive to gender issues, particularly the needs of young women when conducting physical examinations or investigating sexual health problems
 - where possible provide a female practitioner, or offer to conduct the examination in the presence of a female nurse or family member (*who is acceptable to the young person*)
- Develop a management plan that addresses the influence of cultural issues and is culturally acceptable
- Where there are language difficulties, use a professional interpreter – this can be organised through the **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)**:
Free GP Priority Telephone Interpreting Service – available 24 hours:
1300 131 450
Free onsite (face to face) interpreting for GPs – Interpreters available 9-4pm:
1300 655 081 (Book in advance)

When taking a patient history or conducting a psychosocial assessment (e.g. **HEADSS**) – enquire about *acculturation and identity* issues:

- *How do they view themselves within the context of their culture?*
- *In which ways do they follow/not follow the norms of their culture?*
- *How do they feel about their own/parents' culture? / the host culture?*
- *What has changed since they became an adolescent? Are they treated differently by parents, siblings, relatives?"*
- *Assess whether intergenerational and cultural differences are impacting on their health and development*

Example:

"What expectations do your parents have for you? How do you see things differently? Who supports you in the family (or outside)? When you feel down, who do you talk to? How do your parents feel about this?"

Engaging the Family

- Engaging the family and gaining the trust of parents is critical in treating young people from other cultures
- Respect the parents' authority with regard to decision-making while helping them to recognise the young person's growing need for independence appropriate to their age and stage of development
- You may need to explain the role of the doctor, as this may differ in some cultures
 - explain to the family and the young person that your role is to work together with both of them to ensure the young person's health
- Where the young person is accompanied by a parent, try to spend some time alone with the adolescent – explain to the parents your reasons for doing this and seek their permission
- Where appropriate, engage the support and involvement of parents/family in treatment – *however never utilise family members as interpreters*

Multicultural Health Services

- A range of multicultural resources and services are available in NSW:
- The **Transcultural Mental Health Centre (TMHC)** is a state-wide service that provides clinical, consultation services and education and training programs for people of non-English speaking background. These services include:
 - clinical assessment and short term intervention provided in the language of the client by qualified bilingual health professionals
 - over the phone telephone advice and consultation on mental health issues as well as information on cultural/religious issues
- TMHC welcomes referrals from GPs and provides reports on the referred case as well as recommendations regarding care plans
- All TMHC services are free of charge both to the GP and the patient
- TMHC can be contacted on **(02) 98403800** or **1800 648911** (rural areas)
- The TMHC website is: www.tmbc.nsw.gov.au