Module 1 - Unit 1: Exploring the Topic

Case Studies in Cross-Cultural Communication

In health care, communication between people from different cultures can be affected by many factors, including the four factors below. Think of an example for each factor (for example, hand gestures for non-verbal communication).

A Language
B Non-Verbal Communication
C Beliefs about Health
D Family Traditions

Read the situation below and decide which factor from the list above caused the communication problem. Write the correct letter in the box. Then answer the questions that follow.

CASE 1

Juan and Teresa Rodriguez are from Mexico. They take their 10-year-old son, Carlitos, to see the pediatrician. Juan’s brother, Miguel, gives them a ride. The receptionist gives them several forms and Miguel begins to fill them out. When the nurse calls Carlitos’ name, all of the family members go into the exam room. Dr. Kline, the pediatrician, is surprised to see so many people. He smiles at Carlitos and tries to talk to him and ask him questions. But the adults interrupt to tell the doctor about the problem. Carlitos is very quiet. Dr. Kline feels frustrated because he wants to know how Carlitos feels.

1. What is the problem?
   - Why does everyone go into the doctor’s office?
   - Why doesn’t Carlitos answer the questions?
   - Why is Dr. Kline frustrated?

2. How could they resolve the problem?
   - What could the doctor do to improve communication with the family?
➢ What could he say to the family?

3. Have you ever had a similar experience as a patient? As a health care professional?

➢ How did you feel?

➢ What did you do?

Read three more situations below. Decide which factor caused each problem. Write the correct letter in the box. Use each only once. Then for each situation, answer the same questions you answered for Case No. 1. Complete the chart that follows with brief notes.

➢ What is the problem?
➢ How could the problem be resolved?
➢ Have you ever had a similar experience?

CASE 2

Ellen, a nurse, gives her Navaho patient, Jim Nez, information about how to live with his diabetes. She has education materials and explains how he needs to change his diet. He asks very few questions and never looks at her. She thinks Jim is not listening to her because he always looks down or out the window. Ellen feels worried because she thinks he does not want to know more about his illness.

CASE 3

Joanne Lucero is a Filipino patient with high blood pressure. Ben, a nurse practitioner, gives her instructions about the medications she needs to take. Joanne’s husband, who speaks more English than she does, is serving as the interpreter. While Ben speaks, Mr. and Mrs. Lucero smile and nod in agreement. Ben feels confident that both of them understand. Joanne returns for a follow-up visit a week later. Ben realizes that Joanne has not taken the medications according to her instructions. Ben feels confused and does not understand what went wrong.
CASE 4

Hiroshi Tomita is a Japanese businessman on a trip to the United States. He is admitted to the hospital with a 103-degree fever that he has had for several days. Jean, the nursing assistant, removes the blankets from his bed and gives him cold apple juice. He takes only two sips. She explains that they must bring his temperature down. When she returns later, he is sitting in the chair with blankets wrapped around him. His fever goes up, but he keeps asking for blankets and refusing cold drinks.

All cases adapted from:

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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>CASE 2</th>
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<td>What is the problem?</td>
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Are your solutions for the four cases similar? How much should health care professionals know about the cultures of their patients?