Cultural Competence in Pharmacy Practice

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Goals and Objectives

• Understand the cultural factors that influence healthcare behavior in the Latino population

• Understand opportunities pharmacists have to advise, educate, and refer patients

• Understand cultural expressions patients use to describe the cause of illness and label illness.

• Learn to inquire about a patient’s mental health using cultural sensibility
Cultural Values That Influence Healthcare Behavior
Role of Religion

- Majority of Latinos are Catholic
- Abortion not permitted
- Birth control not permitted but.....
- Discretion with “Day After” pill
Role of Family

- Family comes first...”I” am second

- Distorted familism – Women postpone their own healthcare.

- “Your family needs you” “You are important to your family”....for non-compliant patients.

- Adult children participate in the parents’ healthcare
Socioeconomic Factors

- **Level of acculturation**
  - The degree to which the dominant culture is adopted

- **Level of assimilation**
  - The degree to which individuals integrate into the U.S. society

- **Socioeconomic levels**
  - Economic status is closely linked to health status and healthcare access

- **Level of education**

- **Generation/Age**

- **Rural/Urban upbringing**
Common Practices

- Patients will usually consult pharmacist before consulting a physician.

- Patients may confide in pharmacists about breast lumps, testicular lumps, STD’s, symptoms of uncontrolled diabetes, diabetic foot ulcer.

- Patients might be treating with OTC meds only because they think the “problem” will go away or because they don’t have funds to see a physician or to get a mammogram, Pap smear, etc.
Opportunities Not Missed

- When patients seek advice from pharmacists, this opens opportunities for pharmacists to….

- Identify potentially dangerous illnesses and refer patients to their primary physician

- Refer patients to community resources providing free or low-cost care to uninsured patients
  - Smoking cessation programs
  - Project Dulce
  - Mammograms/Pap Smears

- Contact SYHC, UCSD, or community clinics for free screenings/medical care

- Provide patient education in the community’s predominant language (literature)

- Refer patients to education programs

- Refer patients to local support groups
Cultural Beliefs / Cultural Barriers
Language Barrier

- Used trained interpreters vs “bilingual” interpreters
- Use plain language (vs “doctorese”)
- Use simple explanations
- Medical terminology must be accompanied by its definition
- Write what medication is for on label (para proteger el estomago, para la presion alta, para la diabetes)
The Illiterate Patient

- Patients may nod and smile as if in agreement but sometimes this is only to show respect

- Ask patient to repeat instructions or read label

- Sabe leer español?

- Use pictograms

- Ask patients if someone at home can help them read – *hay alguien en casa que le pueda ayudar a leer?*

- Use simple explanations. Medical terminology must be accompanied by its definition

- Sun and moon stickers/International codes
El Susto
(being frightened)

- Diabetes is caused by “un susto” (becoming frightened by witnessing or being in an accident, receiving bad news from home, etc.)

- There is a common belief that illnesses are brought on by something the patient himself did...instead of being caused by germs, bacteria, etc.
Foods to control diabetes

- **Nopales (cactus)**
  - Believed to lower blood sugar and cholesterol
  - Cooked, then cooled and prepared as a salad
  - Sautéed with onions, tomatoes, and variety of spices, and served warm as a side dish for lunch or dinner. They can also be tossed into scrambled eggs and served for breakfast

- **Panela**
  - Although not a cure, it is used instead of the richer, higher fat content Mexican cheeses)
Cortisone

- Belief that medicine prescribed will cause more harm than good (prednisone will cause liver damage, increased weight, “moon” face, osteoporosis.

- Patients may discontinue cortisone because of what friends say about the dangers of cortisone

- Solution: address these concerns when counseling the patient. Explain consequences of not taking the prednisone, that lab tests will watch for any problems with liver. Recommend calcium supplement to ward off osteoporosis concerns.

- Inform patient about the consequences of not taking cortisone.
Antibiotics

- Patients will request antibiotics for flu and colds
- Patients might not finish full course because they’re feeling better.
- Patients will request injections vs oral meds
Mal de ojo (Evil Eye)

- Believed to be a curse placed by someone envious of the patient’s position or good luck.

- Symptoms could include:
  - Problems sleeping
  - Loss of appetite
  - Anxiety
  - Crying spells

- Difficulty with concentration
- Difficulty with school work
- Problems at place of employment
- Episodes of “bad luck”
- Treatment usually consists of a “limpia” or cleansing ritual by a curandero.
Mal de ojo
(Evil Eye)

• Could be signs of...
  - Anxiety
  - Stress
  - Depression
Cold and Hot Balance

Arthritis – believed to be caused by placing “hot” hands in “cold” environment (cold water, ice water, or refrigerator). Hands are considered to be “hot” after ironing clothes, baking, knitting/crocheting, working on the computer, etc. “Hot” hands should be allowed to cool down before handling “cold” items.

Asthma – thought to be caused by or worsen by drinking cold drinks, being in air conditioned rooms, going in and out between air conditioned rooms and outdoors to hot environment

Cold or allergies

Ice will cause arthritis when applied in Physical Therapy

Menstrual cramps – caused by drinking ice cold drinks or walking around barefoot on cold surface

Post-partum – some women will wear socks for a few weeks after delivery so as not to get the uterus “cold”

Sore throat – caused by drinking iced drinks or walking around barefoot on cold surface.
Cold and Hot Balance

• Hervor de sangre – skin rash or welts develop as a result of taking a shower after the patient’s body is hot from working or perspiring. Patients cool off before showering.

• Mal de orina / “estoy mala de los riñones”– Urinary tract infection. This is treated by drinking jamaica, pinguica, pelos de elote, cola de caballo, sitting in cool water (sitz bath). This is thought to be caused by not drinking sufficient water. CAUTION! Patients may also use “estoy mala de los riñones” if they truly have renal insufficiency, dialysis.

• Dirty tongue (tongue covered with white...) – thought to be caused by constipation and treated with laxatives
Cold and Hot Balance

- Sal de uvas – (similar to alka-seltzer) agruras

- Estoy caliente del estomago (my stomach is hot) – fever is caused by stomach illness or “dirty” stomach. Treated with laxatives, orange juice. “Gordolobo” tea, cool compresses used to reduce fever.

- Comidas calientes (hot foods)– cacahuates, chocolate, chiles

- La debilidad (weakness)– aceite de bacalao, hemostyl
Me dió un aire

- Believed to cause...
- Eye redness and secretion
- Back spasm or pain
El Empacho

- A condition thought to be caused when food gets stuck on the inside of the stomach or intestines. The food consumed could be unripened fruit, raw cookie dough, eating large amounts of these foods.

- Symptoms could include stomach pain, fever, diarrhea, vomiting.

- Treatment consists of massaging the stomach and abdominal area in order to “dislodge” the bolus of food. Laxatives are also given.

- This could be a number of GI conditions or food poisoning.
La Mollera Caída
Fallen fontanelle

- Believed to be caused by pulling the bottle away too quickly.

- Treatment consists of hanging the baby upside down while gently tapping the soles of the feet.

- Usually caused by dehydration
Alternative Treatments
Alternative Treatments

- Curandero/curandera
  - Generally uses rituals, prayers, pledges, herbal baths, limpias to affect the healing
- Yerbalista
  - Uses herbal prescriptions that are brought home by the patient then brewed into a tea
- Sobador/sobadora
  - Uses massages and manipulates bones
- Partera (midwife)
  - A woman skilled in pregnancy care and delivery
- Espiritualista
  - Goes into trances and may call upon the spirit of a well-known deceased healer
- Acupuncture
- Fajar el bebé – binding a newborn so belly button won’t “pop” up (no outies).
- Ventosas (cupping)
- Teas
- Homeopathic - “Chochitos”
What Should I Remind My Patients?
Recommendations

- Have patients repeat instructions
- Do not share medications
- Refill medication 3-5 days before it runs out
- Inform patients if they are to refill their medication. Some patients think they are only to take what’s in the vial
- Continue taking medication even if they feel better.
- Do not stop taking usual meds while taking a new one.
Latinos and Mental Health
Patient’s View Toward Mental Health

- Stigma

- Seeking mental health is seen as a failure on the family’s part for not being able to help their own.

- Latino patients are very private when it comes to mental health issues and are resistant to discuss them “outside of the home”.

- There is fear of exposing the family’s privacy when “talking” to a mental health professional.

- Patients may seek “consejos” (advice) from their priest.
Patient’s View Towards Mental Health

- “Los psiquiatras son para los locos”
- Psychiatrists are for the rich who can afford it.
- Traditional views are changing with younger generations.
- Mental health issues are discussed in “telenovelas” (Mexican soap operas)
Assessment and Treatment

- Physicians and pharmacists may be the first point of contact for patients with depression. Not knowing they have depression, they seek medical care because something “physical” is wrong.

- Patients may not know the definition or symptoms of depression. Others may answer negatively when asked if there is a family history of mental health.

- Reframe questions focusing on symptoms. Ask patients if they suffer from crying spells, lack of sleep, lack of concentration, etc...

- Depending on the patient’s belief system, you could tell them that the medication is for “los nervios” instead of depression.
Assessing your patient’s belief toward illness and disease
Cultural Assessment Using the Kleinman Model
(Used to evaluate patients’ view towards origin of disease.)

- What do you think caused your problem?
  - Qué crée usted que le causó este problema?
- Why do you think it started when it did?
  - Por qué crée usted que empezó esta enfermedad en ese tiempo?
- What does your sickness do to you? How does it work?
  - Qué le hace la enfermedad a su cuerpo o cómo crée usted que la enfermedad funciona dentro de su cuerpo?
Cultural Assessment Using the Kleinman Model (Cont’d…)

- What problems has your sickness caused you?
  - Qué problemas le ha causado esta enfermedad?
- What do you fear about your sickness?
  - Qué teme más con respecto a la enfermedad?
- What kind of treatment do you think you should receive?
  - Qué tipo de tratamiento crée usted que debe seguir?
Cultural Assessment Using the Kleinman Model (Cont’d…)

• What are the most important results you hope to receive from this treatment?
  • Cuáles son los resultados más importantes que espera obtener con este tratamiento?
Gracias!