Arab American Culture

When caring for an Arab 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. Members of the Arab American culture prefer only to be touched by healthcare providers of the same gender when receiving medical care and may specifically request that their healthcare provider be of the same gender. Additionally, because males are considered dominant in this culture, males are often responsible for making the final decision in any situation. Keep in mind, Arab American females are likely to avoid eye contact with males, as a sign of respect. Avoiding eye contact is not and should not be considered suspicious, as it often is in American culture. Healthcare providers should also be aware that members of the Arab American culture do not typically participate in organ donation due to religious and ethical beliefs.

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Touch Only When Same Gender

Touching Same Sex-symbols

When receiving medical care, members of the Arab American culture prefer only to be touched by healthcare providers of the same gender.

May Request Same Gender Healthcare Provider

Requesting Same Sex-symbol Doctor

Because of this cultural preference, Arab American patients may specifically request that their healthcare provider be of the same gender.

Females Avoid Eye Contact with Males

Female with Avoid-sign over Eyes of Male

Arab American females are likely to avoid eye contact with males, as a sign of respect. Avoiding eye contact is not and should not be considered suspicious, as it often is in American culture.

Males Often Make Decisions

Male Making D-decision

In this culture, males often make the final decision. This holds true even when the decision is regarding the medical treatment of a family member.

Muslims

Star and Crescent

It is important to note that many Arab Americans may be muslim, so it is important to respect their religious preferences and dietary restrictions by inquiring more. Conversely, not all Arab Americans are muslims, so it is best to ask the patient and avoid these cultural assumptions whenever possible.

Infertility Grounds for Divorce

Infertile-plant causing Divorce-papers

Infertility, if not disclosed prior to marriage, can be grounds for divorce in this culture.

No Organ Donation

No-sign Organ Charity

Members of the Arab American culture do not typically participate in organ donation due to religious and ethical beliefs concerning the matter.

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