



Culturally Sensitive Care MODULE 06

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Elements of Providing Culturally Sensitive Care: Communication – Working With Interpreters

The goal of this learning module is to identify elements of providing culturally sensitive care.

What Will I Learn?

By completing this learning module on Communication – Working with Interpreters, you will learn to:

- Identify the importance of communication in a culturally diverse situation
- Understand the importance of communication as it relates to the therapeutic nurse-client relationship
- Develop an understanding of the importance of interpreters in situations, clients' perspectives and how important interpreters are to them
- Identify strategies for working effectively with interpreters

How Will I Learn?

- By reviewing the content provided relating to how a nurse will utilize communication as part of the therapeutic nurse-client relationship
- By reviewing the case study
- By analyzing the case study and reflecting on the content and how it relates to your values and beliefs
- By utilizing your nursing knowledge, experience and expertise to determine if there are other alternatives or approaches
- By applying what you have learned in this module to your nursing practice

Communication - Working with Interpreters

One of the fundamental principles of the therapeutic nurse-client relationship is effective and meaningful communication between the two. When and if communication barriers exist, the nurse is responsible for developing a communication plan to ensure the client is an informed partner in the provision of care. The communication plan can include both verbal and non-verbal approaches.

Working with Interpreters

Often, as nurses we may face language barriers. Interpreters are often an excellent resource in client situations where these barriers exist.

An interpreter can be any of the following:

- Colleague
- Family member
- Professional interpreter
- Member of the community

Before using an interpreter, it is imperative the nurse obtains consent from the client. Similarly, the nurse must be sensitive to the issues surrounding interpretation and ascertain that the interpreter is appropriate for the given client situation.

While family and friends are most commonly available interpreters, the interpersonal dynamics of these relationships can influence communication in a variety of ways. When it is not possible to use a professional interpreter, colleagues and other contacts can often provide more objective interpretation than can family and friends.

Another important consideration when using an interpreter who is not a healthcare professional is that he or she may have a limited understanding of vocabulary regarding health issues. These limitations may compromise the integrity of the communication. In this case, it is important to provide information that is as simple and clear as possible.

At times, we as nurses and as members of the inter-professional healthcare team, may not realize or recognize the need for an interpreter; we may feel that effective communication has been achieved through non-verbal means, limited language skills, and communicating with various family members. However, what is essentially missing from this approach is the client's own voice. The client may have questions and concerns that he/she cannot communicate.

As accountable professionals, nurses are responsible for assessing a client's understanding of the information provided, whether it is done directly or indirectly through an interpreter.

The importance of confidentiality also needs to be addressed. Interpreters need to recognize that, by virtue of their role, they are gaining access to personal health information that must be protected. To assist with the client's trust and level of comfort with the interpreter, the nurse should inform the client that confidential information is shared only within the healthcare team.

Telephone translation is another resource for nurses for language interpretation. Although this does not replace face-to-face communication and direct interpretation, a telephone interpretation can be a meaningful way of supporting effective communication for the client.

In emergency situations, the Health Care Consent Act allows for treatment to be administered without consent because of a language barrier, it also stipulates that reasonable steps should be taken to find a practical means of enabling communication to take place.

Strategies for Working Effectively with Interpreters

- Obtain client consent to use an interpreter or another arrangement for communication.
- Prior to using an interpreter, attempt to identify factors that may influence the accuracy of the translation, such as differences in dialect, religion, political affiliation, gender, age and social status.
- Explain to the interpreter the importance of repeating everything that the client and the healthcare provider say, without omissions, summaries or judgments. The interpreter's role is to be the voice of the client.
- The interpreter may have valuable cultural or familial insight. Ask the interpreter to share these insights and to identify them clearly as his or her insights and not as facts or the client's actual beliefs.
- Explain to both the client and interpreter that confidentiality will be maintained. The interpreter must not disclose any client information to anyone. Family members and friends need to realize that the role they play as interpreter needs to be separated from their personal role.
- Talk to the client, not the interpreter. Maintain eye contact as much as possible throughout the discussion. Looking directly at the client reinforces that the communication is between the provider and the client, assisted by the interpreter.
- Speak in simple terms, avoid jargon or slang.
- Provide the information to the interpreter in short sentences, and ask the interpreter to relay information after each sentence. Interpreters have to remember and translate everything that they hear. Short sentences reduce the risk of error or omission.
- If during an interpretation you sense that a larger exchange of information than what is being relayed to you, ask the interpreter to explain what is being said. The interpreter may be providing information that is appropriate, but you should ensure that the information is not missed. For example, a client may know what a neurologist does, and the interpreter explains that the neurologist is a highly qualified physician. You may want to add that the neurologist specializes in treating head injuries, such as the one the client has.
- Ask the interpreter to explain to the client any discussion between the interpreter and the nurse. The client should be aware of what is being discussed.
- Write down key points, directions, appointment times and any other material that has numbers or can easily be confused or forgotten. Giving the client a written record prevents the interpreter from having to rely entirely on memory.
- It is important to ensure the interpreter has provided the correct information to the client. Therefore, ask the client to repeat in his/her own words, the information you have given. Remind the interpreter to relay everything the client states.
- Ask the interpreter if there is anything about the interaction that made it difficult to interpret. This will allow you to assess the overall quality of the information communicated.

Case Studies

Keep a notebook to write down your ideas and answers to the questions in the following case studies

Case Study One: Mrs. Xuan Zie arrived at a walk-in clinic with her 10 year old daughter. She does not speak English, however her daughter is able to interpret for her mother. Mrs. Zie is holding her abdomen and appears to be in moderate pain. Her daughter Lily, is upset as she is very worried about her mother.

Reflection

Based on the information presented in this case study:

1. What are some strategies the nurse should consider to resolve this situation?
2. Does this nurse have a culturally sensitive practice issue or the potential for a problem?
3. In your analysis, identify the Professional Standards that are not being met in this situation.
4. Review this case with a colleague and discuss your results. Consider the following when determining if a culturally sensitive situation is a problem.

Discussion

Quite often families of different cultures need to rely on their children to interpret for their parents. As a nurse we must be sensitive to the needs of both the parent and child.

In some circumstances, there may not be readily available interpreters onhand, so the nurse will have to work with the child to conduct an initial assessment and determine the severity of the presenting situation.

There may be clinical situations whereby the parent and child may feel uncomfortable talking about health issues like vaginal discharge, menstruation and pregnancy, thus compromising the accuracy of the health history.

The nurse should strive to find an adult interpreter in order to conduct a comprehensive health history for the client. Similarly, the nurse needs to address the child's concerns and fears appropriately, as well as acknowledging the stress associated with having to interpret for her mother.

At any time a nurse uses a family member as an interpreter, the nurse must carefully evaluate each situation on an ongoing basis.

Case Study Two: A community health nurse is asked to teach a 65 year old woman of Chinese descent how to perform self-continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis. The woman has no family, speaks only Mandarin and lives in a Chinese housing community.

The visiting nurse identifies the language barrier and creates a plan of care with the goal of promoting communication. The client has a good friend next door and indicated that she would be comfortable with her as her interpreter.

The nurse discusses this with the neighbour and she agrees to be the client's interpreter. The nurse reviews the importance of confidentiality related to her client's health. The nurse provides dates and times of the upcoming scheduled visits and the neighbour agrees to be available during those times when the nurse visits.

The plan of care indicates that the nurse will knock on the neighbour's door at the start of each visit, the neighbour will accompany the nurse to the client's apartment, and the nurse will use the interpreter to promote communication throughout the visit.

Reflection

Based on the information presented in this case study:

1. What are some strategies the nurse should consider to resolve this situation?
2. Does this nurse have a culturally sensitive practice issue or the potential for a problem?
3. In your analysis, identify the Professional Standards that are not being met in this situation.

Discussion

The care plan that this nurse has developed demonstrates a thoughtful and comprehensive process that is responsive to the client's needs. There is strong evidence of the nurse consulting with the client and supporting the client's choice of an interpreter.

The nurse stresses confidentiality and respects the neighbour's schedule by providing a list of planned visits for the client.

Consider the following when determining if a culturally sensitive situation is a problem.

The following worksheet allows you to capture your ideas!

1. What are the potential or actual risks to the patient if this situation does not get resolved?

2. How does this issue conflict with CNO's Standard of Practice? Which Standards?

3. What practice setting or unit policies/procedures are you unable to meet?

4. Who else is affected by this issue/problem?

5. How could you resolve this issue or problem? If you are not able to, who would you go to?

6. What resources might give direction to resolve the issue/problem?

7. What ideas or suggestions can you offer to resolve the problem?