



**The Norman Knight Nursing Center
for Clinical & Professional Development**

PCA Quick Reference Guide: Caring for Patients from Different Cultures



MGH has a richly diverse patient population with patients/families coming from a variety of different countries and cultures. They present us with a great learning opportunity. There is a danger when caring for any patient to assume that they think/want the same things that we would. It's important to get to know the patient, what's important to them and identify any special considerations they may need.

Where do we get our values and belief system? From our parents/families, where we grew up, all the places we have lived, school, religious upbringing, our jobs, and the friends we associate with

It may be helpful to get some general information about your patient's culture when preparing to care for him/her. However, you should not assume that each person has those particular preferences, but rather use it as a starting point of discussion.

When caring for your patient, it would be helpful to know how they feel about:

Care- Is there anything that you would like or are concerned about related to your care?

Pain- How do people from your culture express pain and suffering? Are they stoic (don't show any signs) or do they cry and moan? Are you like that?

Diagnosis- When there is important information to be shared by the doctor, who would he/she be speaking to? Directly to you?, your family? Or the male head of your family?

Caregiver- Would you be comfortable with both men and women providing direct care for you?

Family- Who do you consider your "family"? For instance: immediate nuclear family, extended family, or friends/others?

Food- What are the most common foods eaten in your culture? Is it important for you to have them available?

Medications- How do you feel about taking medications? Do you use any herbs or home remedies?

Death/Dying – Do you have any expected rituals or rules related to dying or care of the body? (This may not be appropriate until discussed with the RN)

Any information that you receive should be reported to the RN in order for the patient to receive the most patient-centered care.