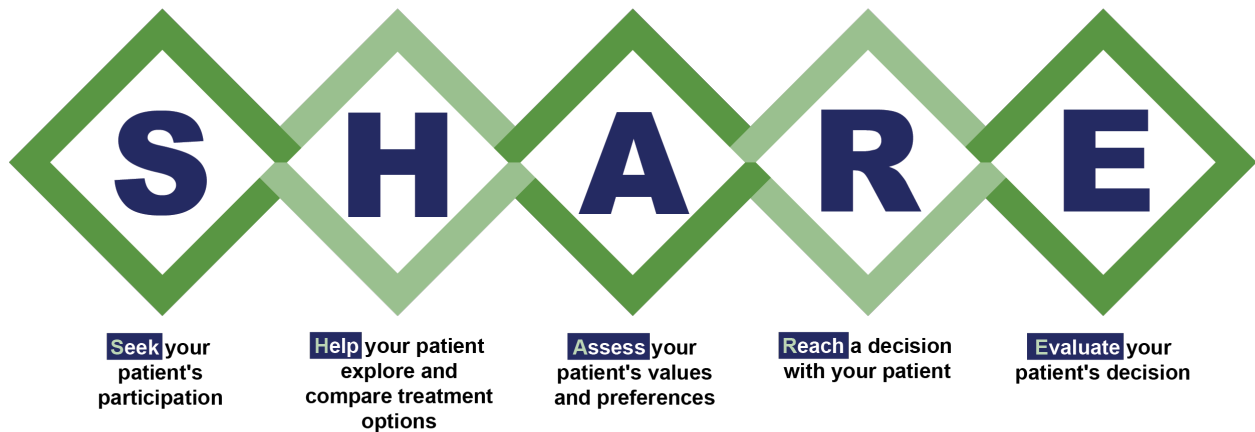


The SHARE Approach: Cultural Competence and Getting To Know Your Patient



Providers striving to deliver high-quality care to all patients understand that cultural factors influence patients' health beliefs, behaviors, and responses to medical issues. This fact sheet provides guidance for how to consider cultural differences as you build effective relationships with your patients during shared decision making.

Cultural competence is essential for effective shared decision making

Learn how to interact with diverse patients

- > Keep an open mind. Remember that each patient has a unique set of beliefs and values, and they may not share yours.
- > Ask patients about their beliefs regarding their health condition (e.g., “What do you think caused the problem? What do you fear most about the sickness? Why do you think it started when it did?”). This information will allow you to make the most of your interactions during shared decision making.
- > Recognize that the meaning or value of health prevention, intervention, and treatment may vary greatly among cultures, especially for behavioral health.
- > Be aware of your own culture and how that may affect how you communicate with your patients.
- > You won’t be able to learn about every aspect of every patient’s culture. Don’t be afraid to let your patients know that you are unfamiliar with their culture. Invite them to explain what is important to them and how getting and staying well works in their community.

Provide qualified medical interpreters

- > Provide qualified medical interpreters for patients whose English proficiency is limited. Using unqualified interpreters is more likely to result in misunderstandings and medical errors. The use of unqualified interpreters—such as a family member, friend, or unqualified staff member—is not advisable. Using a minor child to interpret is only acceptable in emergency situations.

Work to build trust

- > Show respect for your patients in culturally appropriate ways. Make it clear that your role is to help them choose from among options, not to make the decision for them.
- > Recognize that in many cultures, family members are deeply involved in health decisions. Involve extended family members, when appropriate, in shared decision making and when planning care.
- > Encourage patients to ask you questions. Explain that asking questions is a good way to learn about health problems and options for treatment. Say, “What questions do you have for me today?”

Dig deeper with cultural brokers

Cultural brokers can help you learn more about the differences and similarities between cultures. They can tell you how to better address the patients you serve regarding cultural appropriateness, beliefs about health, and barriers to communication. Cultural brokers might include healthcare and social service workers and cultural group leaders. Ask them to suggest resources your practice can use to learn more about your patients' cultures.

References

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