

INFORMATION FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS WHEN DEALING WITH A MUSLIM PATIENT

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I. Your Muslim Patient

With the growing Muslim population in the USA, the encounter between a Muslim patient and American hospitals and physicians is likely to increase. Knowing the religion of your patients will improve the communication and health care.

Islam means peace and submission to the will of God (Allah). Muslims believe in one God (Allah) and the last Messenger, Mohammed. They also believe in all the other prophets from Adam to Jesus, all the revealed books, the angels and the last day.

The Five Pillars of Islam are Faith, Prayer, Fasting, Charity and Hajj (Pilgrimage to Mecca).

II. How Muslims View Illness

Muslims receive illness and death with patience and prayers. They consider an illness as atonement for their sins. They consider death as apart of a journey to meet their Lord. However, they are strongly encouraged to seek treatment and care.

III. Some Islamic Health Practices

Cleanliness is considered "half of the faith." Qur'an, the holy book, prohibits eating pork or pork products, meat of dead animals, blood and all intoxicants. Fasting from dawn to dusk daily for one month a year brings rest to the body and has many medical values. Meditation and prayers bring psychological tranquility.

IV. Additional Islamic Health Practices

- * Regard for the sanctity of life is an injunction.
- * Circumcision of the male infants is recommended.
- * Blood transfusions are allowed after proper screening.
- * Assisted suicide and euthanasia are not permitted.

- * Autopsy is not permitted unless required by law.
- * Maintaining a terminal patient on artificial life support for a prolonged period in a vegetative state is not encouraged.
- * Abortion is not allowed except to save the mother's life.
- * Transplantation in general is allowed with some restrictions.
- * Artificial reproductive technology is permitted between husband and wife only during the span of intact marriage.
- * While Islam opposes homosexuality, it does not prohibit Muslim physicians from caring for AIDS patients.
- * Muslims can have a living will or a case manager.
- * Genetic engineering to cure a disease is acceptable but not cloning.

What the Health Care Providers Can Do For Their Muslim Patients

- * Respect their modesty and privacy. Some examinations can be done over a gown.
- * Provide Muslim or Kosher meals.
- * Allow them to pray if they can and read the Qur'an.
- * Inform them of their rights as patients and encourage a living will.
- * Take time to explain tests, procedures and treatment. Many Muslims are new immigrants and may have a language problem.
- * Allow their Imam to visit them.
- * Allow the family to bring food if there are no restrictions.
- * Do not insist on autopsy or organ donation.
- * Always examine a female patient in the presence of another female.
- * Allow the family and Imam to follow Islamic guidelines for preparing the dead

body for an Islamic funeral. The female body should be given the same respect and privacy as she was living.

- * Identify Muslim patients with word Muslim in the chart, name tag or bracelet.
- * Provide same sex health care person (MD or RN) if possible.
- * Preferable no male in the delivery room except the husband.