CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

MTI Induction Event 29th-30th October 2018
Content

1. Introduction
2. Culture Shock
3. Adaptation
4. Examples of differences
5. Clinical setting
6. Coping strategies
What do I know about cultural differences?

- Grew up in New York City, USA
- English father and Filipino mother
- Worked at the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy in Berlin, Germany
- Worked at the United Nations in London, UK
- Currently work in London, UK
Get around in ENGLISH

Lesson Twenty Five

How to be Polite

1. Wrong

HELP!

2. Right

Excuse me, Sir. I’m terribly sorry to bother you, but I wonder if you would mind helping me a moment, as long as it’s no trouble, of course.
Making tea and talking about the weather

“‘Ooh, isn’t it cold?’ – like ‘Nice day, isn’t it?’ – is English code for ‘I’d like to talk to you – will you talk to me?’ or simply another way of saying ‘hello’.”

— Kate Fox, Watching the English
Culture Shock

A psychological disorientation that most people experience when living in culture markedly different from one’s own.

Not a medical condition, but a real experience for many people moving abroad.

Often triggered by deeper cultural differences in mindset, customs and interpersonal interaction. These turn cultural transition into a struggle.
Symptoms of cultural shock

- Overwhelming homesickness
- Boredom
- Excessive sleep or insomnia
- Compulsive eating
- Stereotyping
- Hostility, feeling of anger
- Feeling of sadness and loneliness
- Feeling lost or confused

- Over-concern about your health
- Headaches, pains and allergies
- Feeling of vulnerability, shyness, insecurity
- Idealising your own culture, feeling sentimental
- Questioning your decision to move to this place
Adaptation curve

- **Honeymoon**
- **Culture Shock**
- **Adjustment**
- **Adaptation**

*Time*:
- 3 months
- 6 months
- 9 months

*Perceived Competence*
I LOVE IT HERE! FIGHT ON!

NO ONE UNDERSTANDS ME. EVERYTHING IS SO DIFFERENT...

OH IT'S NOT BAD HERE AFTER ALL. I EVEN KIND OF LIKE IT!

CULTURE SHOCK
Observable differences

**Customs** – some cultures don’t allow specific foods or drinks, or may have rules about how the food is prepared

**Religious practices** – some religions require time off for specific days or time for prayer during the working day

**Dress** – some cultures have specific clothing (e.g. hijab, turbans)

**Family obligations** – in some cultures family is strongly prioritised and it may sometimes conflict with work

**Social life** – different standards of what is ‘appropriate’ regarding social behaviour, work ethics, sexual behaviour, personal growth, well-being etc.

**Non-verbal behaviour** – disparities between what certain gestures, facial expressions, eye contact etc. mean in different cultures and how are they interpreted
Behaviours and Practices
Characteristics that are apparent to the casual observer

Attitudes
How the core values are reflected in specific situations in a daily life: socialising, working etc.

Core Values
Learned ideas of what is good or bad, desirable or undesirable, acceptable or unacceptable

Institutions of Influence
The forces which create and define a culture’s core values

- History
- Religion
- Educational systems
- The media
- Economy
- Family
Cultural Differences in Clinical Setting

- Approaching patients
- Communication with patients and families and their reactions
- Dealing with sensible issues, difficult diagnosis, consent and confidentiality
- Communication with members of staff
- Language barriers; misunderstanding English turns of phrase
- Hierarchy in the hospital
- Autonomy
- Hostility and racism
- Religious and ethical issues – dietary requirements, blood transfusions, oral/mechanical contraception, termination of pregnancy, end-of-life decisions
- Criticism, feedback and evaluation

MIDWIVES

CONSULTANTS
How to communicate well with people from other cultures?

- Acknowledge relativism
- Respect their religion and customs
- Learn about their culture
- Accept there may be problems in communication
- Use humour
- Ask and speak out
How to make yourself feel better

- If you feel you are struggling with differences, fight the thought of giving up.
- Join a crafting group, try playing sports, attend a local church or prayer group, take a language class or go to the gym. Meeting new people and forcing yourself to become a part of the community will help you.
- Be social and open: talk to the receptionist, befriend fellow trainees, speak to patients, consultants and staff.
- Ensure that your home space feels good and comfortable.
- Take the time to acclimatise. Be patient with yourself and with others. Friendships are made over time, not overnight. British people often form friendships slowly, but once they are made they last a lifetime.
- Go outside. Walk around your neighbourhood. Be seen. Smile. Visit the coffee shop or market. You will soon be recognised and feel so much better after hearing “Good morning” from your neighbour!
- Go on tours, be the tourist in your town. Get to know the city, the history and culture. This will ease you into adjustment and adaptation.
You will encounter cultural differences and some of them may be difficult to deal with.

The UK (especially in big cities) is multicultural and you will probably come across co-workers, patients and friends from many foreign countries.

There will be problems you think you understand until you face them.

Don’t panic if you experience the symptoms of culture shock.

People react in various ways which are sometimes difficult to predict and understand. Be professional and respectful to them.

Remember that not everyone is like you or has the same beliefs. Not everyone will understand your culture and values. Try to appreciate other perspectives.

Don’t assume. Learn.
Thank you!

Contact: Lee Morgan Watkins
E-mail address: MTI@rcog.org.uk