

Case study on cultural differences

Business



Cultural differences can pose problems for health care workers. In the case of Linda German, she is faced with the decision to report a woman for child abuse, or chalk it up to cultural differences. The question shouldn't be whether or not she should report Mrs. State, but rather, are Mrs.

. State's actions really considered child abuse? The answer to this can get muddled in cultural beliefs. For Americans, her actions qualify as abusive because Mrs. State is unnecessarily causing harm to baby Marie by burning her. To the Mien culture, this is merely an act of protecting the child and ruing her from an ailment.

It really depends on what viewpoint one looks at it from. In the Mien culture, practices like this burning ritual are commonplace. The Mien culture believes in spirits and rituals that can cure ailments. To some outside of the culture, these practices may seem barbaric, but to them, some of American practices may seem barbaric as well. For example, Linda mentions the differences between burning a child and causing a child pain by giving them a shot.

Both cause the baby to cry, and to both cultures, both are considered to be helping the baby stay healthy.

To anyone outside of the American culture, American medical practices can potentially seem just as barbaric as burning a baby. This is directly related to cultural relativism, or "the view that practices and behaviors can be judged only by the cultural standards of the culture in which those practices occur," (Hagen, n. d.).

According to David Hagen, "rejecting cultural relativity implies that there are universal standards by which the practices in all cultures can be evaluated," (Hagen, n. D.). If Linda assumes that Mrs..

State's beliefs are barbaric and should be reported, she is racking ethnocentrism, or "the view that one's own culture is the superior culture and therefore its standards are the 'universal' ones that should be used to judge behaviors in all cultures," (Hagen, n.

D.). Linda needs to decide whether her practices and beliefs are superior to Mrs.. State's, and therefore the standard by which to compare Mrs..

State's actions. Should Linda find Mrs.. State's actions unacceptable in the American culture, how should she proceed? Should she report Mrs..

State for child abuse, or should she confront her in the hopes to change Mrs..

. State's opinions concerning Mien cultural cures and medical practices? If Linda decides to confront Mrs.. State, she should probably explain to her that in America, most people would consider her actions abusive to baby Marie and that she should probably not continue to "cure" her in this manner. This poses another ethical dilemma.

By imparting this knowledge to Mrs.. State, Linda is, in a sense, assimilating Mrs.. State to American culture. How far is too far? If Mrs.

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State gives up this practice, and similar ones, in order to not seem abusive to her American peers, what else will she have to give up from her culture?

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Land's best options for handling the situation are to talk to Mrs.. State and try to explain the dilemma to her. She should convey that she understands the cultural differences, but that if another doctor who does not understand sees the burns, it may be misconstrued as child abuse. She shouldn't threaten Mrs.

. State with reporting her, but should rather allow Mrs.. State to see both sides of the story, as Linda is seeing them. Hopefully, this will allow Mrs..