

# Diversity in faith and the health care provider

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A comparative review of four religions: Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Christianity. This paper examines the belief systems and how diversity in faith affects the care givers philosophy of providing care. The importance of nurses to seek spiritual awareness is growing as the population becomes more diverse and healthcare facilities increase their efforts to create healing environments and meet the needs of every patient's body, mind and spirit.

Diversity in Faith and the Health Care Provider. Understanding the diversity in faith within the health care setting helps maximize the healing care provided. Faith influences coping strategies, health behaviors and attitudes about seeking health care. The purpose of this paper is to compare the philosophy of providing care from the perspective of Buddhist, Judaism, and Islam faith with that of Christianity. As the population becomes more diverse, so does the need to become spiritual competent. Buddhist Faith Buddhism is based on the teachings of Buddha and focuses on finding inner peace.

The goal of a Buddhist is to find “ enlightenment” or a perfect peace through which will end his suffering. If enlightenment is not obtained a Buddhist will be reborn and continue to suffer another life (Chan, et al. 2011). The core beliefs are there is a right and noble path which leads to enlightenment, Karma: for every action there is an equal or opposite reaction, and Samsara which is the continued cycle of life and death that continues because of karma (Wilkins, et al. 2010).

Buddhist exercises faith with prayers, mantras, mudras, prayer wheels and use of other objects to practice their faith. Being respectful of belongings and asking before touching or moving is important (Wilkins, et al. 2010). Death

and Dying is a very important experience for Buddhist: Therefore a care giver will need to adjust what is typically known palliative care and have open discussion of expectations to meet their spiritual needs. Allowing for uninterrupted prayer and meditation as a Buddhist reflects on his life.

Having a clear mind is important and they may decline pain medication or sedatives. A Buddhist's perspective of a nurses who understands the importance of this belief and uses non-narcotic methods to reduce pain and provide comfort is also providing a " true expression of loving kindness and compassion in helping to relieve the suffering of others" (Chan, et al. 2011). Some other aspects to Buddhism is the care of a monk or nun require the care taker to be of the same sex, since they took an oath of celibacy.

Additionally, the practice of Buddhism does not require a person to be a vegetarian and monks general only eat once a day and do not eat after lunch time. Since there are many cultures within the Buddhist faith it is important to ask (Chan, et al. 2011). Jewish Faith Judaism exists mainly in Israel, Europe and the USA. Judaism is the belief of one God and that Moses was the greatest prophet and Jesus was a false prophet. They read from the first five books of the bible which is called the Torah and pray to God only.

Their religious leader is called a Rabbi who will recite scripture to the ill, perform ceremonies, sermons in a synagogue on Saturdays. The way Judi live their life is the most important aspect of their religion. The Jewish faith has a heighten awareness of health and consider health a mortalresponsibility. As far back as two thousand years ago Jewish people practiced frequent hand washing and cleansing before meals. Furthermore,

Jewish laws prohibit eating shellfish and pork to prevent trichinosis, which is still practiced today. Therefore asking about dietary restrictions is necessary.

**Islamic Faith** Muslims believe in one God who has no son. Jesus is considered a prophet, but Muhammad was the last prophet sent by God. Muslims read from the Koran or Qur'an and worship in Mosques on Fridays. Islam is indigenous of African Americans, South Asians and Arabians. Religious leaders are referred to as Imams and have diverse qualifications and expertise. Imams pray with the ill and help patients to cope by helping them to maintain hope in God or Allah. Additionally Imams encourage healthy lifestyles, advocating for patient needs, and assisting in healthcare decisions.

Women may not lead men into prayer and therefore cannot be Imams (Padela, et al. 2011). Islam practices of involve praying, fasting and religious rituals, such as the pilgrimage to Mecca. Islam main perspective on health and illness is that “ Health and illness become part of the continuum of being, and prayer remains the salvation in both health and in sickness” (Rassool, 2000). Therefore allowing time for prayer is essential. Since 9/11 misconceptions, discrimination and abusive behaviors towards Muslims have resulted in a delay of care in the U. S. therefore they may not be forthcoming about their faith or spiritual needs, leading to sicker patients with stifled spiritual care (Padela, et al. 2011).

**Christian Faith** The writer of this paper is of Christian Faith, a protestant, a believer in God who is a holy trinity of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus is his son and incarnate of God himself. Religious leaders are called pastors or ministers and in the

Catholic religion leaders are referred to as priests or nuns. Faith is practice through prayer, reading the bible, and attending church on Sunday.

Fellowship with other Christians, reaching out to non-believers to spread the word of Christ and living a righteously are encouraged. However, it is the belief that Jesus Christ is the savior of man and only through this faith will a person live eternally in paradise with God. Comparative Analysis While some faiths embrace death as a new beginning into the afterlife or next life, Judaism does not emphasize the afterlife and survivors are instructed to only grieve for a limited time and not excessively.

However, Buddhism discusses death and dying openly and wants to maintain consciousness for as long as possible to mediate and reflect. Visualization and relaxation techniques are a large part of their meditation. Judaism, Islam and Christianity all believe in one God and prayer helps to the body, mind and spirit. Buddhist believes that the collection of ones “ physical body, sensations, perceptions, mental formation, and consciousness”... “ Will dissolve at the time of death, although some stream of consciousness undergoes rebirth” (Chan, et al. 2011).

Although Buddhism is the least practiced among the religions discussed, it is Islamic that is the most misunderstood and is met with inequalities.

Providing a safe place and building trust is required to meet the spiritual needs of American Muslims. Conclusion All religions teach love, compassion, and righteousness. Therefore, respecting ones spirituality and assessing for spiritual needs is an important aspect of all patient interactions.

Understanding why other faiths believe what they do help nurses to facilitate

and accommodate practices and honor sacred rituals, prayers and meditation.