

Transcultural Nursing Theory: Bridging Gaps and Promoting Cultural Competence

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Mini Review

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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly interconnected world, where individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds frequently interact in healthcare settings, the importance of transcultural nursing theory cannot be overstated. Developed by nursing theorist Madeleine Leininger, the Transcultural Nursing Theory (TNT) offers a framework that guides healthcare professionals in providing culturally sensitive and competent care to patients from various cultural backgrounds. This theory acknowledges the significance of cultural differences in healthcare, aiming to bridge gaps and promote cultural competence in nursing practice. Transcultural Nursing Theory is rooted in the understanding that culture profoundly influences an individual's beliefs, values, practices and behaviors related to health and illness. Leininger emphasized the need for nurses to be aware of these cultural differences and integrate this knowledge into their practice. The theory's central tenet is that by understanding and respecting cultural variations, nurses can deliver care that is respectful, effective and appropriate for each patient.

Keywords: Transcultural nursing theory, Cultural competence, Healthcare

INTRODUCTION

Culture is defined as the learned, shared and transmitted values, beliefs, norms and practices that influence a group's thinking and behavior. It includes aspects such as language, religious practices, dietary preferences, family dynamics and perceptions of health and illness. Leininger proposed that nursing care has both universal aspects (those that are common across cultures) and culturally specific aspects (those that are unique to a particular culture). Nurses must be adept at recognizing these differences and similarities to provide holistic care^[1]. This concept focuses on helping individuals maintain their cultural practices and values related to health and well-being. Nurses aim to support patients in adhering to their cultural rituals and beliefs while receiving healthcare. In situations where cultural practices conflict with medical interventions, nurses should work collaboratively with patients to find solutions that respect both medical needs and cultural values. Sometimes, cultural practices may be detrimental to health. Nurses play a role in educating patients about healthier alternatives without disregarding the cultural significance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural competence is a cornerstone of Transcultural Nursing Theory. Cultural competence involves being aware of one's own cultural biases, actively seeking to understand different cultural perspectives and adapting nursing care to suit individual patient needs. By embracing cultural competence, healthcare providers can bridge gaps that may otherwise hinder effective communication, trust-building and ultimately, optimal patient outcomes^[2]. In an increasingly diverse and interconnected world, cultural competence has emerged as a pivotal skill in various fields, none more so than in healthcare. The ability to understand, respect and effectively interact with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds is essential for bridging gaps in healthcare disparities, improving patient outcomes and fostering a more inclusive and equitable healthcare system.

Cultural competence refers to the ability of individuals or institutions to effectively communicate and interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. It involves not only understanding the cultural norms, values, beliefs and practices of various

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groups but also integrating this knowledge into one's interactions and decision-making processes. Healthcare disparities, often rooted in socioeconomic, racial, or ethnic factors, continue to persist^[3]. These disparities lead to unequal access to quality care and poorer health outcomes among marginalized groups. Cultural competence is a key strategy for addressing these inequalities. When healthcare providers are culturally competent, they can identify and understand the unique needs and challenges that different patient groups face. By doing so, they can tailor their care plans and interventions to suit the cultural and individual preferences of each patient. This not only improves patient adherence to treatment but also reduces the likelihood of misdiagnosis or inappropriate care due to cultural misunderstandings.

Language and communication are significant barriers in healthcare, particularly in multicultural settings. Cultural competence helps healthcare professionals navigate language barriers, facilitating effective communication with patients who may have limited English proficiency. This not only ensures accurate medical histories and symptom descriptions but also empowers patients to actively participate in their care decisions. Moreover, cultural competence builds trust between healthcare providers and patients. When patients perceive that their providers understand and respect their cultural values and beliefs, they are more likely to open up about their health concerns, share crucial information and comply with treatment recommendations^[4]. Trust is the foundation of a successful patient-provider relationship and is instrumental in achieving positive health outcomes. Cultural competence is intricately linked to patient-centered care, an approach that prioritizes the individual needs, preferences and values of patients. By recognizing the cultural influences on patients' health beliefs and behaviors, healthcare providers can develop care plans that align with patients' values, making them more likely to engage actively in their healthcare journey.

DISCUSSION

In addition, cultural competence encourages shared decision-making between patients and providers. Instead of imposing a one-size-fits-all approach, providers collaborate with patients to develop treatment plans that respect cultural considerations while aligning with medical best practices. Cultural competence is not limited to individual interactions; it extends to shaping healthcare policies and practices. In healthcare institutions, promoting diversity and cultural competence among staff members fosters a more inclusive and equitable environment^[5]. By valuing and respecting the contributions of professionals from various backgrounds, institutions can create a culturally sensitive healthcare system that better serves the diverse patient population. Developing cultural competence requires continuous education and self-awareness. Healthcare professionals must engage in ongoing training to deepen their understanding of various cultures, increase their cultural sensitivity and enhance their communication skills. Institutions should incorporate cultural competence training into their curricula and provide resources for healthcare providers to stay informed about the latest cultural trends and research.

Patients are more likely to adhere to treatment plans and participate in their care when their cultural values and beliefs are respected. This leads to better health outcomes and higher patient satisfaction. Cultural competence helps nurses overcome language barriers and facilitates meaningful communication. When patients feel understood, their anxieties decrease and they are more open to sharing crucial health information. Cultural competence in nursing addresses health disparities that often arise from inadequate understanding of cultural nuances^[6]. By providing culturally sensitive care, nurses can help diminish these disparities. Trust is essential in healthcare relationships. When patients feel that their cultural identity is valued, they are more likely to trust their healthcare providers, leading to more effective collaboration.

While the Transcultural Nursing Theory offers valuable insights, its application isn't without challenges. Cultural competence requires ongoing education and self-reflection, which can be time-consuming for busy healthcare professionals. Additionally, understanding the intricate cultural intricacies of every patient group can be daunting. As healthcare continues to globalize, transcultural nursing will become increasingly relevant. The theory's principles need to be integrated into nursing education curricula and healthcare organizations should offer training programs that promote cultural competence among their staff. Technology can also play a role in bridging gaps, such as through translation apps and cultural sensitivity training platforms.

CONCLUSION

The Transcultural Nursing Theory stands as a critical framework for contemporary healthcare practice. By acknowledging and addressing cultural differences, nurses can foster trust, understanding and respect in their patient interactions. As the world becomes more interconnected, transcultural nursing will remain an indispensable tool for promoting effective healthcare delivery and bridging gaps between diverse cultural backgrounds. Cultural competence is not just a buzzword; it's a vital skill that has the power to transform healthcare delivery. By bridging gaps in understanding, communication and trust, cultural competence plays a significant role in reducing healthcare disparities and improving patient outcomes. As the world continues to diversify, healthcare providers and institutions must prioritize the development of cultural competence to ensure that every patient receives respectful, patient-centered and effective care, regardless of their cultural background.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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