

COMPASSIONATE *Care*

How does a patient's religion, gender, race and socioeconomic status factor into clinical decision-making?

Patient values are individual characteristics such as gender, race and ethnicity, religion and socioeconomic status that can influence health and well-being. As health care providers, it's important for athletic trainers to consider patient values during their clinical decision-making process. There are several strategies you can use to improve your cultural competence as a health care provider, such as Linda Leavitt's three-step strategy.*

1. Reflect on your personal experiences when specific values have influenced your decisions as a patient and as a clinician.
2. Learn about the different values that influence outcomes and have positive and negative influences on patient experience.
3. Value the communication between patients and clinicians – don't be afraid to start a conversation and ask questions.



RELIGION

Religion is shown to have a positive impact on an individual's physical and mental health, with those who regularly attend religious services more likely to have healthy eating habits, higher levels of physical activity and better coping skills. Regular attendance has shown to decrease in depression and substance abuse.

What to consider:

- As you're providing care, be aware of any potential religious concerns when evaluating and treating patients.
- Be aware of any dietary restrictions associated with certain faiths, such as Orthodox Judaism and Islam. Make accommodations for religious fasting practices, such as those that take place during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.



RACE AND ETHNICITY

Race and ethnicity are directly linked to the health care disparities also associated with gender and socioeconomic status. Minority patients have been shown to have less insurance coverage and more barriers to health care. Health concerns, such as asthma, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and obesity are higher in African-Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives.

What to consider:

- Know your patient's race and ethnicity so you can be aware of the associated health care disparities.
- If there is a language difference, make sure the patient thoroughly understands any at-home exercise or medication-related instructions.



GENDER

Gender can be highly intertwined with health and health care disparities. For example, research shows men are more likely to avoid the doctor out of fear of bad test results and are often more hesitant to show emotion or admit to a mental health concern. Women, especially minority women, often have less access to quality family planning and reproductive care.

What to consider:

- Identify the pronoun by which the patient identifies – he, she or zie. This doesn't necessarily relate to biological gender, but rather the individual's gender identity.
- Transgender patients and those who identify as LGBTQ+ are less likely to seek care because of perceived negative attitudes and stigma from practitioners as well as a fear that practitioners have a lack of understanding or knowledge. These individuals are more likely to have higher rates of depression, suicide, substance abuse and self-harm.



SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Socioeconomic status has a significant impact on a patient's prior and current health status. Individuals who live in or grew up in poverty have overall a lower health status, less access to care and a higher mortality rate.

What to consider:

- Preteens and adolescents in low socioeconomic households experience a higher rate of risky behavior, decreased physical activity and a higher risk of sexually transmitted diseases.
- Adults in low socioeconomic households are at higher risk for diabetes, cardiovascular disease, osteoarthritis and depression.