Health Promotion (2020) Cuban American Culture

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There is no one size fits all technique when caring for clients. Each client is different than the one before and will be different than the one after. Therefore, nurses need to provide individualized care in order to achieve the most effective care. Part of personalized care is taking into consideration the client’s culture. Culture in nursing is crucial. It is used when building a nurse client relationship, obtaining health history, developing a plan of care, carrying out interventions and any teaching. The Cuban American culture is composed of various beliefs, values and views on health and illness. Taking there into consideration can provide better insight on how to create the most effective health promotion plan for these individuals.

Synopsis of Cuban American Culture

The Cuban American culture is rich and lively. Family is highly valued in this culture and is the center of many practices and customs. Often, Cubans live in tight communities. With Cuban women entering the workforce families have shifted from patriarchal to more equality among spouses. (Giger & Davidhizar, 2008, p. 763) The elders take care of the young children and in turn the children grow up and take care of the elders. Elderly people of this culture often get cared for at home and only go into nursing homes if necessary. (Giger & Davidhizar, 2008, p. 763) Family being most valued, when someone in the immediate or extended family is sick family members will come to provide support. If someone is experience imminent death family members will also take turns being at the bed side. (Giger & Davidhizar, 2008, p. 767)

The value of family is also seen in customs involving children. When a young girl turns 15 she often has a quincenera. This is a huge party announcing the daughter is now at the age to begin dating. When the daughter begins dating another traditional practice is for her father to chaperone. (Giger & Davidhizar, 2008, p. 763) “Parents and children tend to have strong relationships with parents and to be supported long after becoming adults.” (Giger & Davidhizar, 2008, p. 763) These practices further enforce the highly place value of family in Cuban American culture.

Music and religion also play a big role in Cuban culture. Rumba, salsa, Habanera and bolero are among popular music for Cuban culture. Although Catholicism is the most common faith group, Santeria is often integrated in customs and practices. Santeria are beliefs which derived from African voodoo and the worship of Orisha. Santeria incorporates rituals, animal practices and the use of amulets and incantations. (Giger & Davidhizar, 2008, p. 764) A large portion of Cuban Americans practice personalized religion as opposed to regularly attending mass. They do this by having shrines in their homes and crucifixes. (Giger & Davidhizar, 2008, p. 764)

The value of family is also seen in Cuban Americans views on health and illness. Family members tend to be the primary source of health information, especially the older women. Home remedies are also used frequently. For instance, medicine plants, fruits, and vegetables are used for specific physical ailments. These herbs and folk medicines are sold in stores called botanicas. (Giger & Davidhizar, 2008, p. 766) Many Cuban Americans would not want a DNR but instead use measures to prolong life and/or provide comfort for their family members. (Giger & Davidhizar, 2008, p. 768) Family may be present during a health history and discussing illness or treatments. However, if discussing AIDS or HIV, the patient will not have family present. If there is a terminal diagnosis, family members may want decide what information gets told to the patient. (Giger & Davidhizar, 2008, p. 763)

The common theme in this culture appears to be family. In knowing this, developing a plan of nursing care that is culturally specific should follow. Without understanding a client’s culture, at least on the basic level it is impossible to provide the most effective care. These are the considerations I took when developing a plan of care for the leading health objective.

Leading Health Objective

The Healthy People 2020 leading health objective nutrition and weight status can benefit Cuban Americans greatly. The goal is to “promote health and reduce chronic disease risk through the consumption of healthful diets and achievement and maintenance of healthy body weights.” (Healthy People website, 2013) This will help reduce the risk for coronary heart disease and Type 2 Diabetes. Cuban Americans are over twice more likely to die from diabetes than non-Hispanic whites. (Huffman, Vaccaro, Zarini, & Nath, 2011) They also have the highest amount of deaths with diabetes as the underlying cause when compared to Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans. (Huffman, Vaccaro, Nath, & Zarini, 2009) People with diabetes are at higher risk for coronary heart disease. Risk factors for Coronary heart disease include abdominal obeseity, hypercholesteremia and smoking. (Huffman et al., 2011) Therefore, early screening and treatment to obtain healthy nutrition and weight status would reduce the risk factors for developing diabetes and coronary heart disease in Cuban Americans.

There are many influences in obtaining healthy nutrition and weight status. Knowledge and attitudes towards nutritional food play a role. Cultural norms and access to healthier foods also impact nutrition status. Therefore, the goal is to give people the knowledge to make healthier choices and help make these choices more accessible to them. (Healthy People website, 2013) Marketing also effects food choices and therefore should be considered when developing a plan. In targeting a healthy weight status, foods high in nutrients should be promoted as well as physical activity. (Healthy People website, 2013)

Specific Considerations

When developing a Health Promotion Plan for Cuban Americans, specific considerations for that culture should be incorporated. The interview which is done when obtaining the health history should be tailored as much as possible to the Cuban American culture. This is in order to make the client comfortable and the subsequent care more effective.

The first consideration is the language. An assessment should be done to see which language is best to communicate to the client with. If Spanish is preferred a translator who speaks the same dialect is optimal. The reliability and validity of the translation is also important. Sometimes words directly translated do not have the desired meanings. (Giger & Davidhizar, 2008, p. 762) Cuban Americans tend to be spontaneous and outgoing. When communicated with them, they may use hand gestures and speak loudly. When communicating, requests may seem aggressive even when they aren’t meant to be. (Giger & Davidhizar, 2008, p. 762) It is important to understand that this form of speaking is cultural and not meant to be offensive.

Its is not only important to understand how clients of this culture communicate, but also how they perceive those they communicate with. As nurses we should be aware as to which of our actions are considered appropriate and/or inappropriate in a given culture. Cuban Americans value eye contact and lack of eye contact and silence are seen as uncertainty. Therefore, nurses should maintain eye contact in order to establish trust with the client. It is also considered impolite to interrupt someone who is speaking. (Giger & Davidhizar, 2008, p. 762) Nurses should try not to interrupt the client when answering questions during the interview. However, at times restating the clients answer and guiding the client back to the question may be needed if the client goes off topic. Privacy is also valued in this culture and therefore the nurse should understand that the client may not share highly sensitive information. (Giger & Davidhizar, 2008, p. 762)

The client may or may not want family around during the interview. This depends on the topic. Sexual history, AIDS and HIV are topics clients usually want to discuss alone. However, when discussing other illnesses and treatments clients may want their family there to consult with. (Giger & Davidhizar, 2008, p. 762) It is important to find out about the use of home remedies. One reason is in order to ensure that they don’t conflict with any medications and/or treatments. However, it is also good to know so you can incorporate them into the client’s plan of care. A detailed and accurate nutrition history should be done because Cuban Americans are at risk for Diabetes and Coronary heart disease. (Huffman et al., 2011) Asking how foods are prepared and portions are important aspects of the nutritional assessment. A nutritional assessment can be useful in incorporating the client’s favorite foods in the plan of care.

A major consideration during the interview and health history is the value of family. Tailoring teaching and interventions to the family dynamics as opposed to the client individually, will be more effective. For example, if the wife cooks and the husband is a diabetic perhaps meal preparation should be taught to the wife as well as the client. Understanding these considerations will not only help develop a client-nurse relationship but will allow the care to be most effective. Clients will have care that is tailored to their culture and information given to them rather than “general” interventions that may not fit their lifestyle.

Health Promotion Plan

To tackle the nutrition and weight status issues Cuban Americans face I will be creating a Community Health and Wellness Center in Miami- Dade County, Florida. Based on the Pew Hispanic Center and the Census Bureau, Florida is the state with the most heavily populated Cuban Americans. (Brown & Patten, 2013) The 2008 Census Bureau shows Miami-Dade County is the nation’s third largest Hispanic community and 54% of Hispanics in this area are Cuban American. (Roth, 2008) The high Cuban American population in Miami-Dade County makes this the best location to reach out to this population.

The Community Health and Wellness Center is called Havana Haven Health and Wellness Center. I chose this name because Havana is a capital city in Cuba and Haven means place of safety. I want the Community to feel a connection to the name (Havana) and know that their beliefs and traditions are safe here (Haven). Services offered are free of charge but a committed family membership is encouraged. We want clients to come if they are sick, healthy, or just want to socialize during our events. The architecture of the building would embrace traditional Cuban architecture. Havana Haven is going to have a homey, non-intimidating feel. I want the community to feel comfortable coming here. Since it is a Community Health and Wellness center I am going to use vibrant paints and art to keep it from looking like a clinic or hospital. Recruitment events for the staff will offer incentives for Cuban, Spanish speaking employees. The staff includes nutritionists, doctors, nurses, and social workers.

In order to reach out to the community I will use Spanish radio stations and television stations. Enlisting highly regarded members of the community and involving Havana Haven in community events, clients will learn more about our services. Hosting blood pressure monitoring and glucose screening events before Havana Haven opens will help bring in clients once we open. Surveys will be handed out asking what services they would like to see offered. If they have a say and feel involved, people will be more likely to come. Havana Haven’s message is that this is being built for their needs. Havana Haven is in the community, for the community.

Havana Haven will offer numerous amounts of services. The include Blood pressure monitoring and glucose and cholesterol screenings. A nutritionist will be on staff to offer teaching on healthy cooking variations of traditional Cuban cuisine. The service “Sabor y Salud” (Flavor and health) focuses on healthy eating. The goal is to teach clients that healthy eating does not mean abandoning your favorite, traditional dishes and it does not mean eating flavorless food. Sabor y Salut will offer cooking demos and social events with these healthier recipes. The Health and Wellness Center will have a Café providing these healthy meals. This will be an alternative to eating fast food. It will have regular business hours and clients are more than welcomed to stop by during lunch breaks.

The various nutritionists will also help teach clients about weight management. Being at a healthy weight does not have to be full of torturous dieting and exercising. At Havana Haven clients will have the option to join various dance classes including, Rhumba, Habanera, and Zumba. In addition there will be a Havana Haven baseball team clients will have the option to join.

Family being highly valued, families will have the option of seeing the same health care providers. There will also be services dedicated to the children and elderly family members. The dance classes will have separate children classes. There will also be a child’s baseball team. Nutritionists will work with parents on how to pack healthy lunches and keep healthy snacks in the house for children. They will also work with children on teaching them what nutritious foods are and how to make good choices on what to eat. The elderly and homebound clients will have the option to receive these services at home. A nutritionist, doctor and/or nurse will make needed visits to draw blood, provide glucose monitoring and teaching. The Café will also send meals to these homes if needed. Havana Havens provides needed services to clients; accommodations will be made to help families.

Havana Haven is dedicated to community service. We will work to bring healthier foods to schools and supermarkets. We will also host various community events. We encourage clients to incorporate cultural beliefs and values to promote health and wellness. Together, with the community we will help reduce risk factors for coronary heart disease and diabetes. Most importantly, we will teach clients that they do not need to change who they are while they do so.

Conclusion

Achieving cultural competency in the nursing practice is a long process. Each cultural has their own beliefs and considerations which need to be made. However, clients deserve nurses who understand the importance to accommodate their culture into a plan of care. It is important to study transcultural nursing, although I believe one will further learn it through experiences. With each client, each experience, nurses will learn more about different cultures. It is important to never lose sight in that every client is different, and their culture is a big part of who they are. Including their culture is just as important as obtaining a health history. You can’t make the most effective plan of care without the whole picture of who they are.

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