

TOP TIPS

Addressing Cultural Needs in Relation to Nutrition and Hydration at End of Life

C - Communication - talk with the person and their family, ask what is important to them, what gives meaning to their lives and the lives of the people they love. What are their views in relation to food and drink and how it may or not add to the persons comfort as they approach end of life. Poor communication is consistently reported as a barrier for minority ethnic groups when receiving care, lack of sensitivity around individual's cultural and spiritual difference can enhance the feeling of stigmatism and isolation.

U - U (you) - Know your own beliefs and the impact that your culture will have on how you will discuss people's beliefs and attitudes, you don't have to share a belief to respect it.

L - Language - Language barriers and limited access to translators and advocates may result in an inability to understand what is happening and instil fear and anxiety in the person and their family. This may be equally so when inequalities are caused by reasons outside of culture i.e. Intellectual disability. Learn, be open to learning about peoples differences; Listen to what people have to say about their beliefs and their values: Help families learn, discuss the impact of artificial nutrition and hydration when someone is dying: Support families to look at comfort measures i.e. the use of flavoured Ice cubes, or how to make smaller appetising meals. Acknowledge for some that the Loss of needing or wanting to eat and drink can be devastating for families, more so within some cultures who may want life sustaining treatment such as artificial nutrition and hydration

T - Time - Take the time to explore, be interested; Trust the person to make their own decision in line with their beliefs:

U - Understanding - remember you can show understanding and compassion to people without sharing a belief system.

R - Religion - does the person have an affiliation to any religious group: do they have a religious leader they would like to support them: Rituals, do they have any rituals they would like you to support them with pre or post death. Remember there will be different views held by individuals within any given group, so do not make assumptions. Review, personal beliefs may change when facing an end of life situation.

E - Everyone - Everyone has a culture and a belief system, it is part of what makes us who we are, it's empowering to enable people to share their views and beliefs, and it enriches the Nurse Patient relationship and creates an Environment whereby difficult conversations such as those in relation to feeding and hydration, as part of advance care planning, may take place. For some cultures advance care planning may be seen as an Excuse to limit treatment and as such they may choose not to Engage, However this should not mean we don't keep trying and keep communication pathways open.