



The Importance of Understanding International Cultures within a U.S. Based Practice

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Lecture Goals



- Understanding the importance of finding an interpreter
- Becoming aware of cultural traditions that may effect your practice
- Learning the difference between stereotypes and generalizations

So What is Cultural Competency?



- Why is this important?
 - The U.S. is one of the many rapidly growing countries in the world with an incredibly diverse ethnic population
 - It is our duty as physicians to care for our patients with the high level of respect and compassion they deserve in a way they understand

Maintain Curiosity



- Explore and understand your own biases
- Understand your own ethnocentrism
- Avoid stereotyping and generalizations
- DO NOT memorize “facts” about specific ethnic, racial, or socioeconomic groups.
- DO build trust, respect and cross-cultural views.

Generalizations are only steps beyond a stereotype....

- When you meet this patient for the first time... what do you think first?



The Stereotypes



- She must be Mexican
- She must have a large family...
- I'm sure she had her first child at 15 y/o...
- She totally has kids already
- She'll keep having kids cause she will never use birth control...

The Generalizations

- I wonder if she had her first child at a young age?
- I wonder if she is Catholic?
- I wonder if I should offer her Depo-Provera®



Generalizations can be a beginning...

- They indicate common trends
- Anthropology is a study of cultures and common patterns, beliefs, and behaviors
- Further information is *ALWAYS* needed to ascertain whether a generalization fits an individual or not.
- Generalizations may be inaccurate when applied to specific individuals within a culture so remember to be tactful!

My Culture Is Right!

- Ethnocentrism can be especially dangerous if the physician remains closed minded.
 - Patient's are perceived as barbaric and inferior
- Instead, practice cultural relativism
 - Other ways of doing things may be different but they are equally valid

Switch Places With Your Patients



- Imagine the anxiety of a person leaving their East-African Healer to seek western medical care...
- Or the patient that crossed the border from Mexico yesterday so you could evaluate her diabetic ulcer... now expected to quickly make the decision to amputate her leg.
- Or a Muslim man being told to eat many small meals a day for metabolic issues during Ramadan.
- Each patient with a different belief system, different cultural values and each without ever seeing an American physician in a white-coat.

The Impact on Primary Care



- Often the first to see these patients
- It is up to primary care physicians to transition these patients smoothly into the complex world of western medicine
- Be mindful of a patient's cultural beliefs

Understanding Your Patient Could Save Their Life

- When you show your patient respect for their culture, they will show you respect as their physician... and be more in apt to taking your advice and assimilating and adapting your treatment plan to their everyday life.

Overcoming Cultural and Linguistic Barriers

- Bilingual/Bicultural Providers
- Bilingual/Bicultural Community Health Workers
- Employee Language Banks
- Professional Interpreter

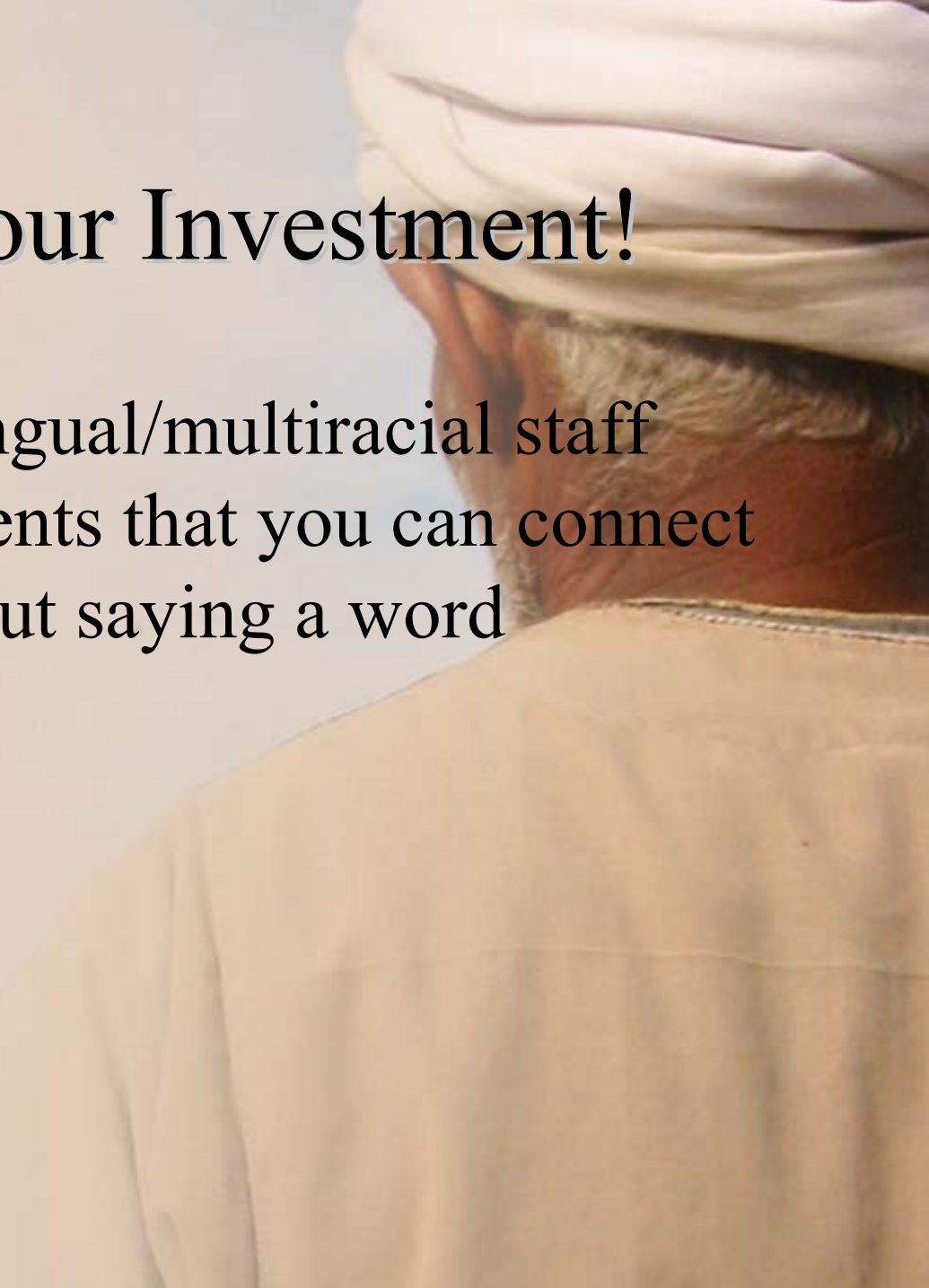


It Is More Efficient for YOU the Provider to Learn Another Language

- Master a second language if you haven't already
- Hire staff that can directly communicate with your patient population
- Common Constraints:
 - Lack of healthcare professionals that are bilingual
 - Finding a healthcare professional that is bilingual and fits the dynamics of your practice
 - Inability to evaluate the language skills of the professional you hire
 - Dialects may be inappropriate
 - Socioeconomic differences
 - Lost in translation – Is there a Swahili translation for MRI?

Diversify your Investment!

- Hiring a multilingual/multiracial staff shows your patients that you can connect with them without saying a word



Overcoming the Language Gap



- Retraining foreign-trained health care workers
 - Assist these individuals in becoming certified or licensed in their original profession
 - Aid in training them in other roles such as a community health worker in order to better serve their community
- Other options:
 - Bringing in Traditional Healers; Shaman; Herbalists

Bilingual Community Health Workers

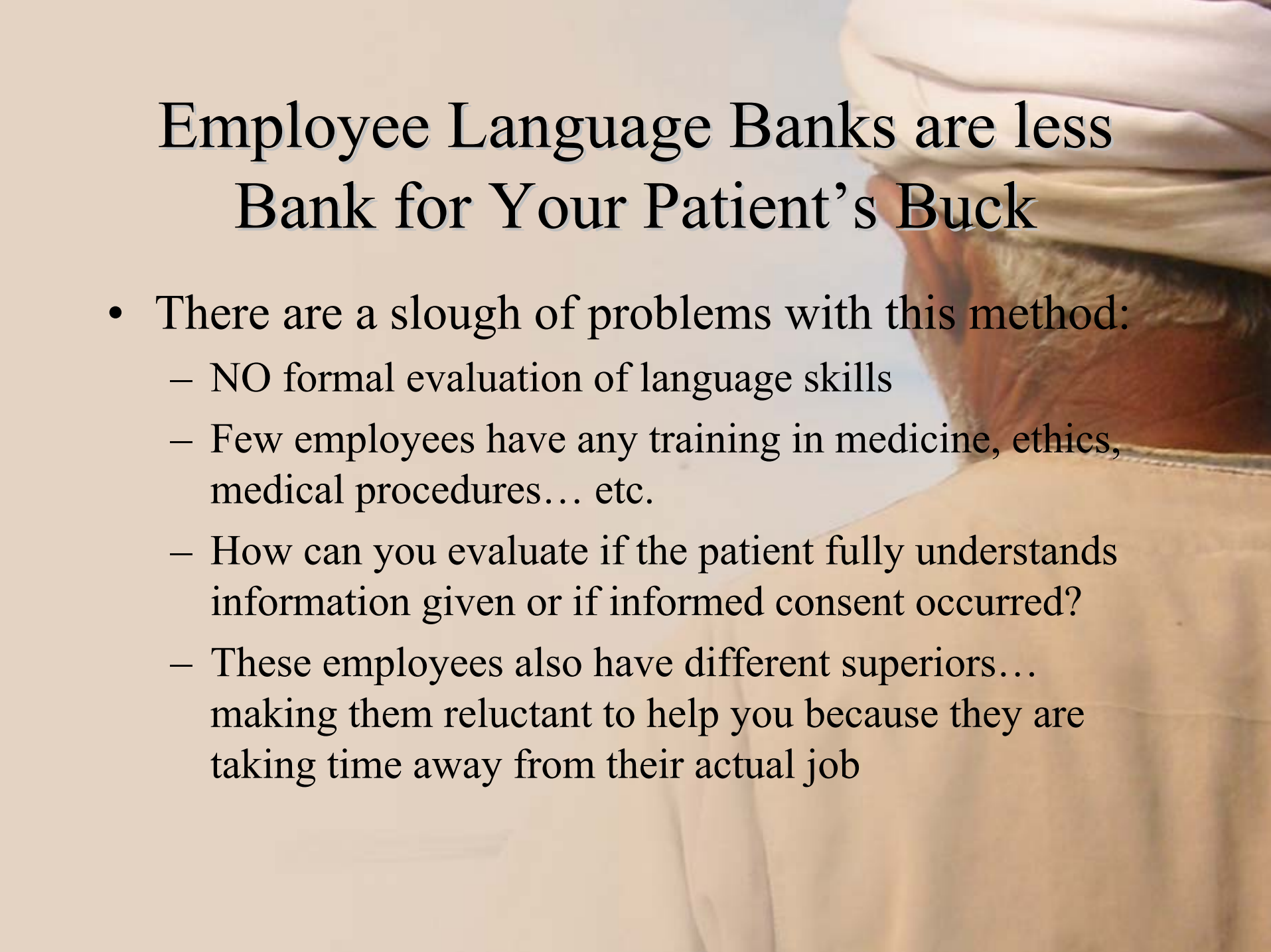


- Can help you access outreach programs directed toward your patient population
- Establish community participation in educating other health care workers about their cultural standards
- Brings continuity and increases quality of care
- **IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER!**
 - Embrace these health care workers as part of your office staff!
 - Some physician's choose to have these workers once a week, isolating them from the rest of the office.
 - Take steps necessary to ensure an adequate work environment for yourself and your staff.

Employee Language Banks



- Some hospitals utilize employees who speak a variety of languages as volunteer interpreters.
 - Low cost
 - Readily Available



Employee Language Banks are less Bank for Your Patient's Buck

- There are a slough of problems with this method:
 - NO formal evaluation of language skills
 - Few employees have any training in medicine, ethics, medical procedures... etc.
 - How can you evaluate if the patient fully understands information given or if informed consent occurred?
 - These employees also have different superiors... making them reluctant to help you because they are taking time away from their actual job

Professional Interpreters



- Arguably the best option!
 - Although expensive
- Especially necessary if you have a large population from a specific background
- Can be hired hourly, as on-call employees or as independent contractors
 - Consider asking all your Spanish-speaking patients to come in on specific days of the week.
- Immigrant social service agencies can be used to develop an interpretation service if a market exists

When ALL Else Fails

- Ask your patient to bring in family, friends, or other individuals that may be able to translate for you.
- However:
 - Be prepared to spend time with these patients.
 - Confidentiality may be compromised
 - Information might have to be censored
 - Family dynamics may be jeopardized

Some Resources That May Help Your Practice

- Society of Teachers of Family Medicine
 - <http://www.stfm.org/corep.html>
- Culturally Competent Care E-learning Course
 - <http://cccm.thinkculturalhealth.org>
- Commission to End Health Care Disparities
 - <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/14629>
- Office of Minority Health's
 - <http://www.omhrc.gov/CLAS>
- Also check with your local Public Health Department for more information...





Start the Scenarios!

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