

END OF LIFE CARE PLANNING AND HOSPICE CARE

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS AT THE END OF LIFE

Life is amazing. Many of us live long and healthy lives, surrounded by family and loved ones. But life on this earth does not last forever. Death is a natural part of life, but it's not the part we like.

For many of us, thinking about death and dying makes us uncomfortable, even afraid. We don't like to think about our own death, or the deaths of **loved ones**. Each **culture** has a different view of the **end of life**. This article will share some **cultural considerations** around death and dying.

VIEWS FROM 3 CULTURAL TRADITIONS

Latino Cultures

Latino refers to someone whose cultural background is from a Spanish speaking country like South America, Central America, or Mexico, or is part of a family from those countries. Latino cultures have great ways to celebrate life, but sometimes **struggle** with talking about death. It is important to many Latino people to have a **spiritual leader** with them when they die.

Hmong Cultures

Hmong people traditionally lived in mountain villages throughout Southeast Asia. Many Hmong have moved to the US. Traditional Hmong beliefs say that even talking about

Whichever culture we come from, nobody wants to die alone. No one wants to **suffer**. We all want to say goodbye to those we love. We all want our beliefs and **traditions** honored.

While you read, **Stop and Think** about your answers to these questions: **1) How does each culture feel talking about death?**

2) Do people from these cultures view death and dying in a similar way?

death can bring death, especially when someone is already sick. In Hmong culture, many families want to continue to care for their sick loved ones. Even when doctors have run out of options, families may try other traditional **treatments** to help their dying loved one.

Somali Cultures

Somali people come from Somalia, a country on the eastern coast of Africa. In Somali culture, death is just part of life. Somalis, who are also of Islam faith, believe only **Allah** knows when we will die. But many Somalis struggle with planning for death, though it is ok to talk

CULTURAL HIGHLIGHT



The qeej (pronounced GHLENG) is an L-shaped instrument made of bamboo pipes. This instrument is played at Hmong funerals to pay tribute to the dead.

*Comment from Song:
The qeej is used to guide the spirit to the after world.

about death or dying for many Somalis.

Cultural Considerations at the End of Life

Communicating your Preferences

Death can come in many different ways: from old age, from an accident, or from illness. It is important to plan for what you want at the end of your life.

End of life care in the United States may be different from end of life care in other countries. In the U.S., doctors **expect** patients to communicate their needs and wants for end of life care. It is important to **communicate** your **preferences** for end of life care. One way to communicate your needs and wants is to write them down and tell your medical providers. Then, your medical providers can follow your wishes. End of life care should respect your culture, wants and needs. Remember, you have the right to an interpreter when talking to your doctor.

One way to communicate with your doctor about your preferences at the end of life is to use a **health care directive**. A health care directive is a letter to your doctor that tells your wishes when you are dying and cannot speak for yourself. A health care directive helps your doctor and family know what you want if you become very sick.

Stop and Think:

- How can an interpreter help you?
- What are reasons to have a "health care directive?"

Support for End of Life Care

The phrase **terminal illness** means that a serious illness cannot be cured. People with a terminal illness will die from the disease. It is important to know that having a terminal illness does NOT mean that doctors or anyone else are "giving up" on the patient, or that no other care is available.

Doctors can try to **estimate** how long the person may live when a person has a terminal illness. No one knows when someone will die. Doctors can give their best idea so patients and families can plan how they want to spend the rest of the time they have together.

In the United States, there is a special way to care for people who are dying. It is called **hospice**.

Hospice is care that keeps the sick person comfortable and free from pain, with family members there to help. Hospice care respects the patient's family, culture and religion.

Hospice is NOT a place. Hospice care can happen at home, or almost anywhere the dying person wants to spend their last days.

Hospice involves many **caregivers**, including doctors, nurses, spiritual leaders, social workers, home health aides, **grief** counselors and therapists.

Hospice is not just for the patient. The family is included. For example, hospice caregivers can help the family deal with grief.

End of life planning is very important. Writing down your wishes at your end of life and communicating those wishes with your doctor is expected in the United States. Talking about what you want if you become very ill or have a bad accident can help your doctor know what to do.

The loss of a loved one is very difficult for all cultures. We all **struggle** to plan for the end of life. Hospice care can honor cultural values at that important time of life.

Hospice and end of life planning can make the end of life a time of loving care for everyone.

Stop and Think:

- How can hospice help patients at the end of their life?
- Find the term **caregivers** in the text. Use clues in the text to define caregivers (don't look at the glossary).

Cultural Considerations at the End of Life

Glossary

Word	Definition
Allah (noun)	used as the name of God in Islam
caregiver (noun)	a person who takes care of and helps someone who is sick
communicate (verb)	to give information to someone
cultural consideration (noun)	thinking about someone's culture; thinking about the way someone else understands something.
culture (noun)	the beliefs and traditions of a group of people
end of life (noun)	the time of death and dying
estimate (verb)	to give your best idea; to make a guess using the information you have about size, amount of time, number or cost of something
expect (verb)	to think that someone should do something
grief (noun)	deep sadness caused especially by someone's death
health care directive (noun)	a letter to your doctor that tells your wishes when you are dying; you write the letter before you are very sick. A health care directive helps your doctor and family know what you want if you become very sick.
hospice (noun)	care that tries to keep a sick person comfortable and free from pain, with family members there to help
loved ones (noun)	the people you love; for example, your family and friends
preference (noun)	something that is liked or wanted more than another thing; something that is preferred
spiritual leader (noun)	a person who leads a religious group; for example, a priest, shaman, or imam; a person who is a guide for their religion
struggle (verb)	to try very hard to do something that is difficult
suffer (verb)	to experience pain, illness, or injury
terminal illness (noun)	a serious illness cannot be cured, and the patient will die from it
tradition (noun)	a way of thinking or doing something that has been used by a group of people for a long time
treatment (noun)	something that helps a disease or injury get better

Cultural Considerations at the End of Life

Hospice Care Team Diagram



References:

www.mnhpc.org

<http://www.learnersdictionary.com/>

<http://www.echominnesota.org/library/honoring-values-end-life-care>