

# Cultural Humility in Reproductive Care: Strategies for Inclusive Practice

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# Disclosures

- I have no actual or potential conflict of interest in relation to this program/conference/presentation.
- Generative AI was not used in the development or content of this presentation

# Learning Objectives

1. Describe cultural humility and its significance in enhancing patient care within obstetrics and reproductive medicine.
2. Identify and address key cultural and systemic barriers, including stigma and communication styles influencing patient experiences and outcomes.
3. Discuss practical strategies and apply culturally informed approaches to improve patient-centered outcomes, foster inclusivity, and navigate complex clinical scenarios within interdisciplinary teams.

# Introduction

- Why are we here today?
- Why this conversation is timely and essential in reproductive health
- Think of a time when you felt truly understood—what made the difference?

# ART & Diversity



Assisted reproduction is a deeply personal journey beyond cultural, ethnic, and social distinctions. It's a path marked by dreams, hopes, and profound emotions. Embracing the richness of our patients' diverse backgrounds and respecting their unique beliefs is at the heart of providing care that is both effective and genuinely inclusive. In this course, we aim to illuminate the profound significance of cultural sensitivity and share valuable insights on how we, as dedicated professionals, can gracefully navigate the psychological facets entwined with diversity in assisted reproduction. We aim to foster an atmosphere of warmth, professionalism, and empathy as we jointly embark on this journey with our patients.

# Importance of Cultural Sensitivity in Reproductive Psychology



Cultural Sensitivity – awareness and appreciation of the values, norms, and beliefs characteristic of a cultural, ethnic, racial, or other group that is not one’s own, accompanied by a willingness to adapt one’s behavior accordingly.

Cultural sensitivity in Healthcare -- “the ability to be appropriately responsive to the attitudes, feelings, or circumstances of groups of people that share a common and distinctive racial, national, religious, linguistic, or cultural heritage”

(APA, 2018; Tucker et al, 2011)

# Lower Referral Rates: Missed Opportunities for Care



Black women are less likely to be referred to fertility specialists than White women.

Doctors often refer black women and couples to REIs for evaluations later or not at all.

Black women are 5x more likely to self-refer to fertility clinics.

(Washington et al., 2023)



# Utilization Gaps Despite Higher Need



(Minority Nurse, 2020)

Only 8% of Black women seek fertility treatment, compared to 15% of White women.

Disparities persist despite higher rates of infertility among Black women.

# Delayed in Seeking Fertility Care: Understanding the Context



- Black women often wait twice as long to seek medical help for infertility
- Delay contributes to more advanced reproductive challenges at the time of treatment.

(Chandra et al., 2015)

# Challenging Misconceptions with Curiosity and Care

Race (n = 155), %		Education (n = 150), %		Age (n = 164), y (%)
European American	82	Professional degree	40	>35 (43) <sup>a</sup>
African American <sup>a</sup>	16	College degree	30	31–35 (38)
Hispanic American	1	High school degree	17	25–30 (15)
Asian American	1	No high school degree <sup>a</sup>	13	<25 (4)

(Ceballo et al., 2010)

# What is Cultural Competence?

Cultural competence is the ability to collaborate effectively with individuals from different cultures; and such competence improves health care experiences and outcomes.

A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations

(Nair & Adetayo, 2019).

# Potential Limitations of Practicing From a Cultural Competence Lens



(Lekas et al., 2020)

- Potential of stereotyping & Stigmatizing patients from different groups
- Disregard for patient's intersectionality
- Inadequately addressing power dynamics between providers and patients
- Failing to recognizing the importance of continuous learning vs. static knowledge

# What is Cultural Humility?

“In the medical context, cultural humility may be defined as a process of being aware of how people's culture can impact their health behaviours and in turn using this awareness to cultivate sensitive approaches in treating patients.”

(Nair & Adetayo, 2019).

# Understanding Cultural Humility



- What is the purpose of cultural humility?
- Create better connections between patients and providers in reproductive health
- Why humility should be a lifelong practice
  - Self-reflection & self-examination
  - Promotes lifelong learning

(Greene-Moton & Minkler, 2020).

# Why Cultural Belief is Critical in Reproductive Care?



- Our belief system informs our choices
- The provider & patient dynamic can be one of trust or could create obstacles and barriers to care.



# Why Does Cultural Humility Matter in Reproductive Care?



- Building trust between provider and patient
- Addresses power dynamics
- Recognizes and respect patients' differences and needs

# Factors That Influence Patients' Decisions About Reproduction Care

- Cultural Beliefs and Stigmas:
- Family & Community expectations
- Religious & spiritual beliefs

# Cultural Beliefs and Stigmas



- Some societies stigmatize infertility, linking it with personal and societal failure, placing significant importance on childbearing for family and societal continuity, and causing emotional distress, social pressure, and discrimination for those affected.

(Serour & Serour, 2021; Dyer., 2008)

# Family Dynamics & Community Expectations

- Family and Community Dynamics
  - Collectivist Cultures
  - Individualistic Cultures

# Religious & Spiritual Beliefs

- Religious Perspectives
- Supportive Environments
- Doctrinal Challenges

# Systemic Barriers

- Stigma about infertility & reproductive choices
- Language barriers and lack of cultural sensitivity in patient care
- Distrust of the medical system
- Lack of Access to care based on race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status

# The Self-Reflective Nature of Cultural Humility



- The pitfall of “Colorblindness” in healthcare
- Why the “I don’t see color” mindset is problematic
- What do we need to do to make the reproductive healthcare experience better for individuals from marginalized groups

# Race, Culture, and Parenthood: Supporting Interracial Couples With Cultural Humility



- Mr. & Mrs. S are an interracial couple who have been struggling with infertility for five years. Mrs. S is a 38-year-old AFRICAN AMERICAN woman. After multiple failed fertility treatments, including IVF, their REI strongly recommends considering the use of donor gametes to increase their chances of conception. Mrs. S expresses mixed emotions about this recommendation and is uncertain about this choice.
- What are the cultural considerations for this couple grappling with cultural, familial, and personal beliefs surrounding genetics, race, and parenthood within the context of an interracial relationship?



# Navigating Infertility and Racial Bias in Healthcare



- Danielle, a 36-year-old African American woman, and her husband, Marcus, have been trying to conceive for over two years. Danielle sees her gynecologist annually and has brought up her desire to have children during her visits. Each time, her OB-GYN has responded with vague reassurance: "You're young, healthy—it'll happen when it's meant to," or "You've got a demanding job, maybe it's just stress." Danielle's gynecologist has never referred her to a fertility specialist, ordered any labs or imaging, or done any further exploration. Danielle is acutely aware of how quickly some of her White girlfriends have been referred for fertility support, even when they were younger or had been trying for less time. The emotional toll is growing. She feels increasingly isolated in her church community, where family and motherhood are central. Conversations about infertility are rare, and she finds it hard to admit that she's struggling—especially as someone who is strong and "has it all together."
- What are the cultural considerations?

# Strategies for Developing Cultural Competence

Explore Interactions  
of Multiple  
Worldviews Across  
the Treatment  
Journey

Create a Safe and  
Trusting  
Environment

Cultural Competence  
Trainings for  
Providers

Listen Actively and  
Empathetically

Ask Open-ended  
Questions

Validate Cultural  
Perspectives

Incorporation of  
Culturally Specific  
Concepts

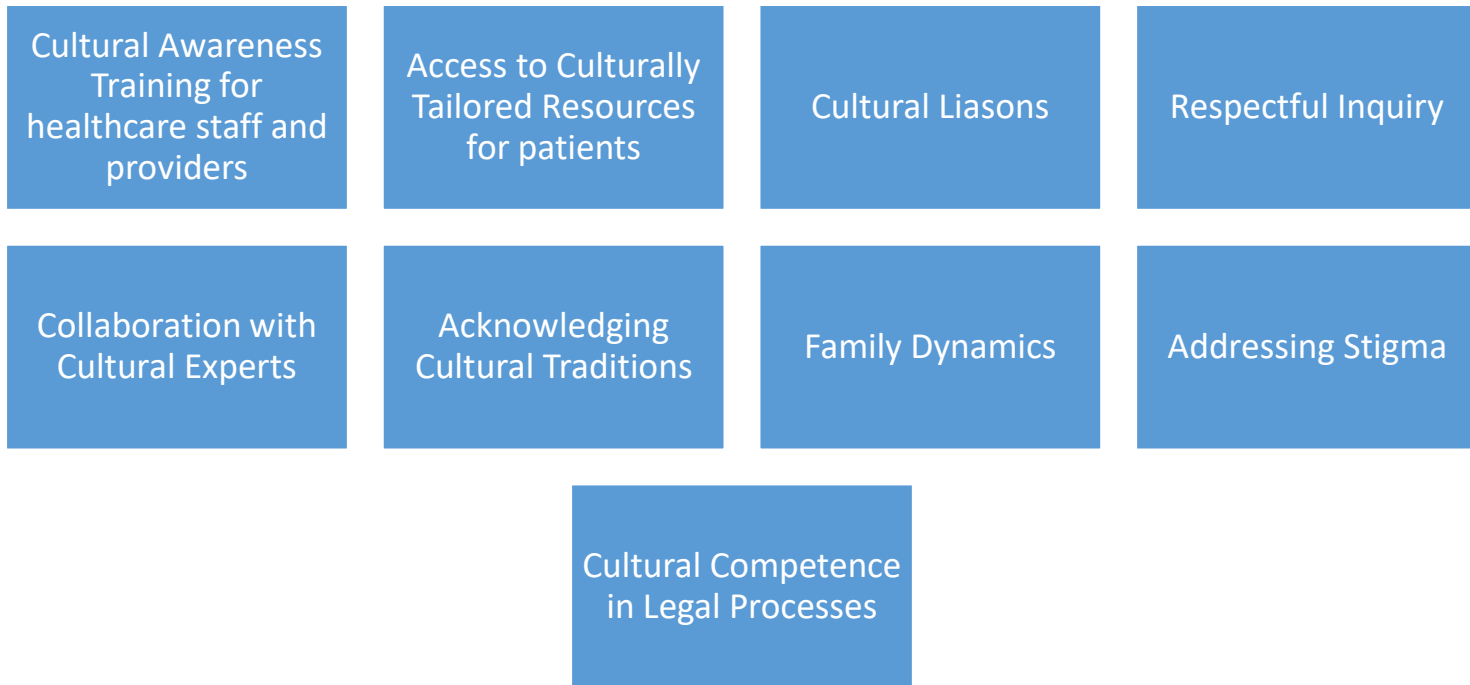
Use of Culturally and  
Linguistically  
Adapted/Appropriat  
e Written or Visual  
Material

Collaborate with  
Culturally  
Competent  
Professionals

Continuously Reflect  
and Adapt



# Cultural Considerations for Collaboration and Advocacy



# Customizing Treatment Plans Based On Cultural Considerations



- Consider ways to implement the patient's cultural background
- Incorporate the patient's Cultural Values and Beliefs into the treatment plan
- Utilize Culturally Relevant Interventions
- Respect the patient's Cultural Practices and Traditions
- Use Language and communication styles that are inclusive
- Address Any Culturally Relevant Stigmas And Taboos
- Explore appropriate Ways that the patient can involve Family and Community that are cultural relevant
- Keep standard of care in mind while being Flexible with Treatment Planning
- Practice Cultural Humility and Continuous Self-Reflection
- Collaborate and Consult with other providers

# Black/African American Fertility Resources



*Fertility for Colored Girls (FFCG) --  
[fertilityforcoloredgirls.org](http://fertilityforcoloredgirls.org)*

*The Broken Brown Egg --  
[thebrokenbrownegg.org](http://thebrokenbrownegg.org)*

*Tinina Q. Cade Foundation --  
[cadefoundation.org](http://cadefoundation.org)*

*SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive  
Justice Collective -- [sistersong.net](http://sistersong.net)*

*Black Mamas Matter Alliance –  
[blackmamasmatter.org](http://blackmamasmatter.org)*

*Kindbody – [kindbody.com](http://kindbody.com)*

# Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Fertility Resources



National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum  
(NAPAWF) -- [napawf.org](http://napawf.org)

Fertility Within Reach -- [fertilitywithinreach.org](http://fertilitywithinreach.org)

Asian Pacific Islander American Health Forum  
(APIAHF) -- [apiahf.org](http://apiahf.org)

# Latin & Indigenous Fertility Resources



The National Latina Institute for  
Reproductive Justice (NLIRJ)--  
[latinainstitute.org](http://latinainstitute.org)

The Indian Health Service (IHS)--  
<https://www.ihs.gov/>

Native American Reproductive Health  
Coalition – [narhc.org](http://narhc.org)

# General Support Organizations Culturally Inclusive Fertility Care



Resolve: The National Infertility Association --  
[resolve.org](https://resolve.org)

Center for Reproductive Rights--  
[reproductiverights.org](https://reproductiverights.org)

We Are Robyn -- <https://wearerobyn.co/>



# Continuing the Work: Advancing Equity in Patient-Centered Care



- Cultural sensitivity and cultural humility are essential factors in healthcare that improve patient care
- To advance care in the reproductive health community, we must be willing to have ongoing dialogue and continuous self-reflection
- continuing dialogue and self-reflection within the reproductive health community Are needed to advance the field
- When we practice culturally responsive care, we ensure that we offer high-quality care treatment that is personalized, culturally aware, and meets the standard of care practices for patients

Q & A

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