



YOU REALISE THAT YOUR PATIENT/CLIENT PERCEIVES DIFFERENTLY THE TREATMENT PLAN THAT YOU DESCRIBE.

Many problems that occur in everyday practice with service users of different cultural backgrounds are linked to different interpretations of treatment and physical or mental illness. Expressions of symptoms and pain can make a diagnosis difficult to establish, especially when the understanding of these concepts differ greatly between the health/social professional and the patient/client. The cultural content of diagnosis thus, needs to be taken into account in the therapeutic process, as well as the so-called "culture-bound syndromes". You will need to assess the cultural factors that may be influencing the symptoms that your patient/client describes or the words used. When some people from different cultures translate concepts into another language they may use a direct translation. For example, the translation of "feeling ill" as when a person do not feel well, might be translated as "having a fever" and not necessarily, involve having a high temperature.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

A Vietnamese mother brings her 2-year-old child to see the doctor. She tells the doctor that the child is suffering from fever. The doctor takes the child's temperature and finds that it is within the normal range. The doctor tells the mother that the child hasn't got a fever. The mother insists that the child has fever and has had it for 3 days and needs medicine. She feels that the doctor is not taking her concerns for her child seriously and becomes upset with her treatment and the perceived lack of understanding.

SOLUTION

The doctor asked her to explain what the word "fever" describes in Vietnamese and explained her also, its meaning in English and what it describes. It took the doctor more time than usual to clarify the situation but finally, understood what was happening with the child.

OPTION 01

Explain to the patient/client what your understanding is of the words and phrases they are using to describe their symptoms. You could use also, a translation system.

OPTION 02

Ask the patient/client to further explain what the symptoms are and to describe as much as possible about exactly how they have been feeling over the last few days. Listen to everything the patient/client says with an open mind, suspending judgement, particularly about the words they are using to describe the symptoms.

OPTION 03

Ask questions to clarify the situation. Ask what words/phrases are used in their own language for how they feel. Expect this to take more time and allow for that to ensure your diagnosis is correct and the patient/client feels they have had a good service.

OPTION 04

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