Communication, Power Distance, and Medication Errors: An Ethnographic Exploration of Cultural Care Practices
I have no identifiable conflicts of interest with the presentation of the following materials. I do not have any commercial relationship with any organization that would prove to be a conflict of interest or a breech of contract.
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Power distance is the extent to which people accept the fact that inequality exists in society.

Providers have high power distance
Professional expertise

Multigenerational family
Determined by age
Hierarchy within family

Cross Cultural Communication Concepts: Power Distance
1) Discover how practicing nurses communicate & negotiate with culturally diverse patients & families
2) Investigate reports of cross-cultural communication concepts
3) Study how culture influences adherence with treatment
4) Analyze avoidance of errors (delay, refusal, limitation)
5) Discover differing perspectives of care-provider, patient, family

Research Purpose
Survey of nurses in practice
  • Face-to-face (20)
  • Web based (13)
Unlimited length of response web-based option

Ethnographic interview
  • Demographic information
  • Open ended questions

Research Methods
• Number of participants: 33

• Mean age: 53 years

• Self-identified ethnicity:
  • African American, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic

• Education:
  • Doctoral, Master’s, & Baccalaureate preparation

• Mean years in practice: 25.8 years
• Practice settings: Acute, critical, ambulatory, community-based care

• Certification:
• One or more national certifications in specialty areas or advanced practice
Interview questions provoked disclosures of:

Cross Cultural Communication & Avoidance of Error: Power distance

Beliefs and practices that may contribute the development of errors
“... power [distance] is used to create adherence...the communication barrier that comes from this is that families become scared & they won’t ask questions about the treatment plan or medications ordered or even question a consent that is handed to them.”

Cross Cultural Communication Concepts: 
Power Distance
1. Power distance creates barriers to effective communication and clarification of care

2. Not understanding the impact of strained communication contributes to errors

3. Nursing education woefully prepares nurses to assist ethnically and culturally diverse families during difficult clinical scenarios as trust and feelings of inequality interferes with care

Identified themes...
“...patients that are comfortable in communications with the clinician are more likely to follow through on health instructions than those who do not have a sense of comfort with the provider...patients express a desire for respect...and distrust a clinician that they feel disrespects them.”

Cross Cultural Communication & Adherence to Treatment Plans
“...perceptions of context changes with culture as well... to acknowledge this difference is important in understanding these cultural differences... in American society we have become too individualistic and have lost sight of the collective... we need to build community & be better colleagues...”

Cross Cultural Communication Concepts: Individualistic - Collectivist
Next Steps

Responding to Medical and Medication Errors: An investigation of Near Miss and Recovery Behaviors During Complex, Multi-Patient Simulation to Reduce Pediatric Injury and Improved Cultural Communication
Thank you very much for listening!