



PRACTICING CULTURAL HUMILITY IN CARE CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR HISPANIC PATIENTS

Cultural humility is the ability to remain **open to another person's cultural identity**. A person's cultural background, beliefs, values, and traditions can impact how they make decisions about their healthcare. Being culturally humble involves reflecting on your assumptions and **being receptive to other people's life experiences**.¹

Hispanic culture embraces a strong **sense of community** and is deeply rooted in **family values**, which can have a unique impact on how epilepsy is perceived. Embracing cultural humility is essential when addressing epilepsy within this community, as it helps healthcare providers understand and respect **cultural beliefs and values**. However, there are **barriers to care** within the Hispanic culture, such as the overall **stigmatization** of epilepsy, a **complex medical system** that is not fully understood by Hispanic patients, and **limited access to healthcare**.² By acknowledging the significance of family dynamics and spirituality broadly associated with Hispanic culture, healthcare providers can **build trust** and offer **culturally sensitive support**, ultimately leading to **better health outcomes**.

Providers can be viewed as **authority figures** and are in a position to heavily influence the patient experience, a role that should be appreciated. In a diverse healthcare landscape, practicing cultural humility and cultivating a deep understanding of a person's cultural background creates an environment of **mutual trust and respect**. This can enhance the **quality of care** and support that is provided to currently underserved Hispanic patients with epilepsy who may take a more passive approach to their health and rely heavily on their healthcare provider. This guide offers a **comprehensive framework** for navigating the multifaceted dimensions of cultural humility, promoting inclusivity and personalizing **healthcare experiences**. The sample questions provided here can serve as a guide for any patient-facing healthcare provider to help **optimize patient communication**. Please feel free to tailor these questions as appropriate to accommodate varying situations and/or patient needs.



Prior to using this guide, ensure that your patient is **comfortable answering questions** related to their unique healthcare and cultural needs, and be prepared to **actively listen and learn**. Acknowledge that you want to be **sensitive to their needs** as individuals and that you are open to correction or feedback if you make mistakes in your language or communication. Remember to give **equal attention** to what is important to them as to their healthcare plan. It is important to remain cognizant of patient **confidentiality and privacy** during communications.



Get to know your Hispanic patients' cultural background

It is important to recognize the unique cultural attitudes and beliefs that your patients may have toward epilepsy. Exploring each individual patient's cultural nuances is essential in providing respectful care and reducing cultural isolation.

Questions:

- Can you tell me about any cultural or spiritual beliefs that relate to your healthcare that are important to you?
 - Can you tell me how these beliefs impact your understanding of seizures?



Understand how your patients perceive their epilepsy

Perceptions of illness influence how patients understand and experience their epilepsy treatment. By considering cultural perspectives (eg, Hispanic cultural beliefs surrounding seizures) doctors can consider these perceptions when developing a care plan to provide more effective and patient-centered care.

Questions:

- What has your seizure care looked like so far?
 - What was good and what was bad?
- Are there any practices (eg, prayer, meditation, other faith-based practice, or community connections) that you follow to help manage your seizures?
 - What concerns do you have about your seizures?



Support your patients' well-being

Hispanic patients may perceive stigma associated with epilepsy, which can be heightened by a sense of cultural isolation. Further understanding of your patients' emotional well-being fosters empathy, self-awareness, and open mindedness, enabling a better understanding and respect of people as individuals and as members of communities.

Questions:

- Can you tell me about any practices you follow (eg, cultural, spiritual) that help your emotional well-being?
 - How can I support you in including these in your care plan?
- How can I help you with your mental well-being (eg, stress and anxiety)?
- Do you need access to any other healthcare resources (eg, counseling)?



Understand how to best communicate with your patients

For some Hispanic patients, English is not their primary language, which may represent a barrier to quality care. It is important to remain sensitive to the possibility that patients may be more comfortable speaking their native language.³ Additionally, offering patient materials written in Spanish may help foster an inclusive environment.

Questions:

- What language are you comfortable using when we talk?
 - Is there a specific dialect in your language you are more comfortable using?
- Would language services (eg, translator, family member) be helpful for us to understand each other?



Discover your patients' preferred ways of learning

Learning preferences vary among cultures and individual patients. Understanding how your patients learn best is crucial to ensuring you are providing an informative and collaborative environment.

Questions:

- How have you/your family learned about your seizures so far?
- What would be the best way for you to learn about seizure disorders and treatment (eg, reading materials, podcasts, videos)?
 - How can we help you learn about seizures and treatment?





Understand your patients' support system

Family and community support play a significant role in the Hispanic culture. The family voice is an important factor in the care of Hispanic patients because of the strong influence it has on Hispanic people's lives; patients often involve family in healthcare decisions and communication. The overall well-being and adherence to treatment are influenced by the support systems your patients have in place. Family members can help in a person's treatment plan, such as learning seizure first aid. Understanding and respecting these support systems can enhance patient care.³

Questions:

- Do you need help managing your seizures daily?
 - If yes, who helps you now and how do they help?
- Do you want to involve family members or any other caregiver in your healthcare choices?
 - If yes, who would you like to involve and how?
- Would you like to be connected with other people from your community living with seizures?
 - Would you be interested in joining a seizure disorder support group? If so, The Epilepsy Foundation is one of the many organizations that can help you find support groups. Please visit www.epilepsy.com or call their 24/7 helpline at 1-866-748-8008.



Understand your patients' treatment preferences

It is important to be open to learning about your patients' cultural practices and how they can be incorporated in developing an effective treatment plan. For example, 30% of Hispanic people with epilepsy believe in using herbal remedies and 6% practice spiritual healing.⁴ Further understanding the influence of cultural practices on healthcare choices is critical to enhancing patient care and promoting shared decision-making. However, it is also important to balance cultural influence with modern medicine and ensure that your Hispanic patients appreciate this balance and understand the importance of following their treatment plan.

Questions:

- How do you feel about taking medication for your seizures?
- If you take medication, how and where do you get it?
 - How can we help you with this?
- What other treatments (including herbal remedies) have you or your family used for seizures or related symptoms?
- Do you have any dietary restrictions that we need to consider?
- How important is it for you to be involved in the development of your care plan?



Provide quality long-term care

Ongoing care is crucial for doctors and patients because it ensures that support is maintained throughout the patient journey, which gives patients a desired sense of normalcy and balance. It is also important to manage expectations when discussing treatment options for your patients, as varying degrees of efficacy may exist between therapies. Understanding cultural factors that may impact ongoing care and tailoring care to individual needs fosters trust and optimizes patient outcomes.

Questions:

- What specific goals do you have for your seizure treatment?
 - How can I help you reach these goals?
- How can I help those around you further understand your seizure disorder and its impact?
- What specific impacts do seizures have on your life that we can help you with?
- How can we support you in receiving follow-up care?





Understand barriers your patients may face in accessing healthcare

Acknowledging potential healthcare disparities and barriers faced by Hispanic patients is an important component of practicing cultural humility. In addition to the already challenging treatment journey, Hispanic patients with epilepsy in particular face barriers in accessing healthcare. For example, less than 25% of Hispanic people have access to an epilepsy specialist, compared to 57% of White non-Hispanic people.² A study conducted in 2015 revealed that Hispanic patients are also more likely to be missing comprehensive health insurance coverage and receive significantly fewer antiepileptic drugs to treat their epilepsy, indicating a severe disparity for Hispanic people living with epilepsy.⁵ Additionally, a study conducted in 2023 revealed that Hispanic patients with epilepsy had lower odds of being prescribed newer antiseizure medications than White patients with epilepsy.⁶

Furthermore, providers may not always consider having medical resources available in the Spanish language, potentially creating a utilization barrier for Hispanic patients whose first language is not English. Patients may also feel discouraged or helpless from the time spent waiting for next steps, whether it is finding a neurologist, wait times between medical appointments, or waiting for drug approval. It is important to acknowledge these barriers early so that patients have the comfort of knowing that these barriers are understood and will be addressed.

Questions:

- What problems have you experienced in accessing healthcare?
 - How can I help you overcome them?
- Are you able to access the internet?
 - If not, here is a resource from the National Digital Inclusion Alliance:
<https://www.digitalinclusion.org/free-low-cost-internet-plans>
- It is common that patients may wait several weeks to be seen by a specialist. Would you be interested in hearing about available support (eg, community health groups, patient support groups, health educators) while waiting to see your specialist?
- How do you feel about using our website/patient portal (if applicable)?
- How do you travel to your doctor appointments or pick up your medication?
 - Can you tell me about any transportation challenges you have?
 - What resources (eg, public transportation, directions, parking) would help you overcome these challenges?
- Do you need assistance or referrals for anything else (eg, dietitian, medication management)?

References

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