

Tips: Meeting Multi-cultural Needs in Ageing Patients



The number of older adults representing minority groups is forecasted to increase by 39 percent by 2050 as compared to 21 percent in 2012. Most of the increases are expected to be among the Asian, Native, Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander populations. In addition, the proportion of Hispanic adults is projected to more than double over the next 40 years.

It will thus be critical to provide high-quality healthcare to this ethnically diverse group. Clinicians will have to develop interpersonal skills so that they are able to navigate culture to meet healthcare needs. That is precisely why the American Geriatrics Society's Ethnogeriatrics Committee has developed a set of culturally sensitive indicators to help healthcare providers deliver the best possible care and to improve health outcomes in the diverse older population. The AGS suggests the following questions that practitioners should ask their older patients:

1. What is your ethnicity?
2. What is your preferred language?
3. Do you know that interpreter services are available free of charge?
4. Do you want to choose one of the available interpreter services (online, telephone, in person)?
5. How much education did you complete (None; less than 7th grade; 7th grade or higher)?

Information about the preferred language of the patient is important since language is closely linked to one's culture. By effectively using interpreter services, communication can be enhanced. It is recommended that qualified interpreters be used instead of family members - especially medically trained interpreters as they are better at communicating medical information to patients whose fluency in English may be limited. Information as to whether minority older adults use any complementary or alternative health practices such as home healing therapies and techniques is also important.

See Also: [Need for Nursing Cultural Diversity Education Identified](#)

The AGS also notes that practitioners should be self-aware of their own biases and perceptions and should consider how these perceptions are different than those of people from other cultural backgrounds.

Source: American Geriatrics Society

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