

Cultural Cues and Communicating With Your Korean Patient

Center for Asian Equity and Professional Development (CAEPD) | Office of Patient Experience

This serves as a general guide, recognizing individual differences within each culture, aimed at facilitating optimal care.



Traditional Remedies and Western Health Care

Your patient may prefer:

- To use other traditional remedies as an initial approach for healing, especially during early stages of illness.
- To try traditional approaches first and will seek western medical care later.

Understanding Relationships

- Korean culture traditionally emphasizes loyalty to family and devotion to traditions over individual feelings, though younger generations may lean more toward individualism.
- Assess your patient's kinship relationships, noting which family member accompanied them to the appointment, to identify who is most influential in decision-making.
- Although family members may want to shield a patient from bad news, our responsibility is to the patient, so always ask whom they want involved in medical decisions.



Korean Culture's Norms

- Respect is shown to authority figures by giving a gentle bow at the waist; for elders and authority figures, a deeper bow.
- Respect is also shown by holding objects with two hands while passing them.
- Making gentle eye contact during greetings and conversations is viewed as a nice gesture in Korean culture, provided the eye contact is not intense.
- Your patient may value emotional self-control, appearing stoic.
- Be aware that your patient may not show pain or ask for pain medication.
- Instead of asking your patient about pain, ask "May I get you something for pain?"
- Korean culture highly values efficiency. Therefore, acknowledging and apologizing for delays when expectations are not met would be considerate for Korean patients, who are accustomed to quicker health care services in Korea.



CAEPD is creating positive change in the advancement of professional development and equity through promoting education, enabling candid conversations, and taking tangible action.

For more information, or to get involved, please email us: CAEPD.Core@mountsinai.org



We Stand Together Against Racism and Bias.

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