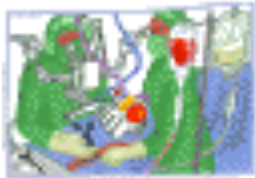




Care of the Muslim Patient



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OBJECTIVES

- Aspects of General care
- Birth
- Dying and Death
- Blood and Organ Donation
- Care of the elderly
- Tips



Aspects of General care



- Preservation of life overrides all matters presented in this seminar.
- Islam places the onus of practising religion on the individual.
- Cleanliness is part of Islamic faith.
- Strong emphasis is placed on the virtues of visiting the sick.
- Where choice exists, medicines containing alcohol/pork derivatives should NOT be used.

Aspects of General care



- Same sex health professional as the patient whenever possible. Unnecessary touching between non-related people of the opposite sex should be avoided.
- For female patients, there is an overriding objective of modesty and privacy. In some cases, a close family member of the same sex may assist in the washing of the sick person.
- A beard is considered a very important religious symbol to the Muslim male patient. Like any other patient, permission must be obtained to shave any part of the beard, which should be done by a man.

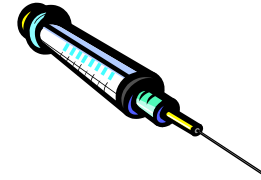


Birth



- Reversible contraception (ie pill, IUDs, condoms) are not forbidden in Islam, but are regarded as undesirable.
- Abortion is not permitted, unless there are very strong medical reasons.
- If pregnancy constitutes a serious threat to the life of the mother, then an abortion is permissible irrespective of the period of gestation.
- Muslims consider fetus after the age of 120 days is a viable baby.
- The death of a fetus after 120 days after conception would require a burial - given to the parents for proper burial.
- After delivery, the placenta (which is part of the baby) should be offered to the parents for disposal.

Birth (cont):



- It is important for a newborn child to have a prayer call recited in each ear soon after birth. It is possible that the parents may want a learned person (an Imam, Mufti or Sheik) to perform this task.
- It is a traditional religious observance to shave the head of newborn babies on the seventh day after birth, or thereabouts.
- Circumcision is performed on all male children. The timing of this varies, but it must be done before puberty.
- The practice of female genital mutilation not supported by the Islamic faith. It is illegal under Australian law, and has no basis in religion.

Dying and Death

- Death is seen as something predestined by God.
- Families may thus appear inappropriately calm and accepting by Western standards.
- In Islam, grieving is allowed for only three days (except that a widow may grieve for 4 months and 10 days).
- Because death is perceived as predestined by Allah, Muslims disapprove of any medical care that may hasten the death of a patient, even for humane reasons.
- If a patient is in a coma, it is preferred that the patient be turned to face Mecca (in Australia, roughly west-north-west), with the right shoulder also being towards Mecca.

Dying and Death - cont

- It is important for Muslims to recite the Qu'ran or prayers in front of the patient or in a room close by.
- For a patient who has just died, the face and right shoulder of the deceased should be turned in the direction of Mecca.
- The whole body of the deceased must be covered by a sheet and should be handled as little as possible. The body must be handled with the utmost respect only by a person of the same sex.
- A cross must never be placed on the body. The body should not be washed, as this will be done as part of a special religious ritual before burial.
- Muslim burials are performed as soon as possible after death, sometimes on the same day. Never cremated.

Autopsy

Sanctity Of The Body

Respect for deceased

Violation of the body

Delay in burial



Hospital / Legal Requirements

Documentation

Greater good

Legal obligations

Autopsy - cont

- Major concerns of relatives:
 - Respect for the deceased
 - Delay in burial
 - Permissibility
- Permissible when:
 - deemed necessary to establish cause of death
 - significant public health interest
 - required by law (suspicious circumstances, Coroner's case)
- Not accepted for routine documentation / curiosity
- ICV is working with the Coroner's Court to produce a fact sheet on autopsies
- In the UK 'Virtopsy' (virtual autopsy) using MRI recently introduced

End of Life

- Once treatment has been intensified to save a patient's life, life-saving equipment cannot be turned off unless the physicians are certain about the inevitability of death
 - *Islamic Juridical Council* (meetings of jurists of different schools in Mecca, Jeddah & Amman)
- Islamic law permits withdrawal of futile and disproportionate treatment on the basis of consent of immediate family members who act on the professional advice of the physician in charge of the case
- “It is the process of life that is to be preserved, not the process of death.”
 - *Islamic Organisation for Medical Sciences Symposium*

Definition of Death

- If three attending physicians attest to a totally damaged brain with:
 - Unresponsive coma;
 - Apnoea; and
 - Absent cephalic reflexes,

the person is biologically dead.

Islamic Juridical Council



→ Agreed On The Universally Accepted Definition Of Brain Death

Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences Symposium 1996

Withdrawal of Treatment

- Challenge for ALL families:
 - Confusion : is it euthanasia *or* withdrawal of futile treatment?
(Suicide and euthanasia are clearly forbidden in Islam)
 - Many Muslims may not realise the permissibility of treatment withdrawal in some cases.
 - Some may question the inevitability of death (some scholars have suggested the opinion of two doctors be sought).
 - The decision to end the life of a loved one is difficult; regardless of one's religious or ethnic background.

Blood and Organ Donation



- Muslims accept blood transfusions and transplants of various human organs.
- It is acceptable for Muslims to donate blood and organs, as the saving of life is considered an act of great virtue.

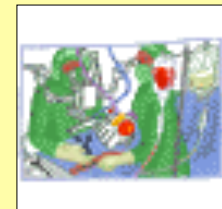
Care of the Elderly

- Elderly regarded with deep respect.
- Care of the elderly is regarded as an avenue to Heaven “heaven found under the feet of one’s mother”.



Tips when caring for Muslim patients

- Given the centrality of the family, consider informing family of medical information, and to be involved in the decision-making process.
- Use your right hand for care - as the left hand is used for washing after elimination
- Good communication - develop and maintain trust
- Do not point the soles of the feet to the patient
- Consider Ramadan when prescribing/administering medication



Tips when caring for Muslim patients

- Consider using elderly members of the community - as often the controlling force in the family, and with increased age comes increased authority.
- Time does not dictate need, instead it is need that dictates time - consider when scheduling appointments. Misconception that father is decision maker
- Nothing to prevent older teens being involved in decision making
- Ask family to seek assistance from Muslim chaplain or the ICV



A final point

- Don't assume every Muslim's behaviour is due to their religion, it may be their culture, upbringing, or simply their personality type.
- Muslims are not a homogenous group; they are extremely diverse.



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QUESTIONS?

