Supporting Culturally Safe Nursing Care

NANB believes that culturally safe care is central in providing safe, ethical, and competent nursing care. NANB recognizes that culturally safe care is required for eliminating health inequities and contributes to improved health outcomes for individuals and families in New Brunswick (College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta, [CARNA], n.d.).

The core values of cultural safety are supported by the *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses* (Canadian Nurses Association [CNA], 2017) and serve as a foundation for culturally safe nursing practice. NANB's *Standards of Nursing Practice for Registered Nurses*, *Standards for the Practice of Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioners*, *Entry Level Competencies for the Practice for Registered Nurses* and *Entry Level Competencies for Nurse Practitioners* also highlight a nurse's[1] responsibility to acknowledge and value each client's culture. As such, nurses have an obligation to respect how a client's culture can impact their interpretation and experience of the care they receive and of the healthcare system (CNA, 2018). Nurses are to reflect on and acknowledge their own implicit biases when working with clients of diverse cultures and cultural backgrounds. Implicit biases are often unintentional but are frequently the cause of insensitive attitudes and behaviors which, negatively affect the nurse-client relationship (Narayana, 2019). Recognition of implicit bias requires a critical reflection of the power structures and equities that exist within one's own culture or cultural systems. When exploring implicit bias, nurses can reflect on the following questions (Narayana, 2019):

- Do I avoid situations with people who have a different lived experience than me?
- How has privilege impacted my own beliefs, attitudes, and actions when interacting with people who have a different lived experience than me?
- When faced with requests from clients with respect to their cultural practices, what is my reaction?
- What is my plan to increase my awareness of implicit bias?
- How will I discuss cultural practices with clients to ensure they feel safe to disclose their cultural beliefs and needs?

When nurses recognize and explore cultural practices with clients it creates a culturally safe environment in which clients can express their cultural beliefs and needs (Horrill, 2021). Cultural safety goes beyond cultural awareness and sensitivity to a space in which clients are respected for their healthcare preferences and are safe to make health related decisions based on their cultural practices (CARNA, n.d.). When engaging in culturally safe care nurses need to recognize the role of history, societal expectations/bias, and trauma in health-related perceptions and decision (First Nations Health Authority [FNHA], 2017). As such, it is imperative that nurses support and respect clients in determining if the interaction with the healthcare system is culturally safe (CARNA, n.d.).

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[1] For the purpose of this document, the term "nurses" refers to graduate nurses, registered nurses, and nurse practitioners.

Cultural safety is achieved through engaging in cultural humility. Cultural humility is a lifelong process of self-reflection to continuously evaluate one's own behaviors and beliefs. This critical reflection enables the nurse to be open to various cultures and cultural practices thus facilitating mutual trust and respectful partnerships (FNHA, 2017).

NANB recognizes the necessity of nurses taking action to support cultural safety throughout all practice environments. Nurses are encouraged to actively reflect upon the following when considering cultural safety in practice:

- How has my culture, beliefs, and values impact my interactions with clients (FNHA, 2017)?
- Has implicit bias impacted the quality of care I have provided to clients (Narayana, 2019)?
- Have I considered how power inequities impact the client's perception of health care systems (FNHA, 2017)?
- Have I created interactions where clients can freely discuss their health goals and where power in health decisions are shared (FNHA, 2017)?
- Do policies and practices within the organization I work for support cultural beliefs and practices? Is there an opportunity to advocate for organization change?

The creation of culturally safe environments is central to providing safe, ethical, and competent nursing care. Nurses have an obligation to respect a client's culture and how each client interprets and experiences healthcare. This can be achieved through reflecting on and actively seeking out opportunities to explore implicit bias, creating of healthcare interactions that are culturally safe, and humbly being open to various cultures and cultural practices (FNHA, 2017).

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