

Cultural Considerations: Some Tips for Careworkers

Indigenous Australians come from a large number of diverse communities with their own unique customs, cultural beliefs and languages. Australia is also home to a rich multicultural population who have come from over 200 different countries. This means that you may be caring for residents and family/community members from several culturally and linguistically (language) diverse (CALD) backgrounds in your residential aged care facility. These residents may have very specific cultural needs regarding their end of life care that can become increasingly important to them (and their family/community) as they approach death, and afterwards.

Key messages

- It is important to be aware of and respect any specific cultural needs, beliefs and customs of each resident and their family.
- Do not make assumptions or judgements about the resident's cultural needs based on their language, religion or country of origin.
- Residents from the same culture will not always have the same values, beliefs and practices.
- Behaviour, preferences and beliefs may also vary between different members of the same family.

What can you do?

- Be aware of customs and practices that show respect for the resident and their family members.
- Ask the resident and their family what is appropriate so you can be sensitive to their needs and traditions – e.g. “to help me care for you, are there any specific customs, traditions and beliefs that are important to you that I should know about?”
- Understand that people have different reactions towards death and dying – e.g. some Indigenous Australians find it distressing to speak the name of a deceased person.
- Communicate in ways that are clear and appropriate – e.g. try to avoid using jargon and use more common terms that they will understand.
- Do not assume that just because the resident or their family can understand spoken English that they can read it as well.
- Think about your own cultural beliefs and values. Do these influence how you feel about people with differing beliefs and values or influence your care and interactions with others?



Why it works

Knowing and understanding the resident's cultural beliefs will help you to be more sensitive to their and their family's needs and traditions. You will be better able to show them and their family respect, and this helps you to provide good end of life care.

Related pages

[Introduction to a Palliative Approach](#) – clicking here will open a printable version of a flipchart that gives tips on cultural considerations in providing a palliative approach to care (see pages 31-6).

[Cultural Considerations: Some Tips for Careworkers in Residential Aged Care](#) – clicking here will take you to a video presentation (10 minutes) on recognising and responding to the cultural needs of residents and their families.

Relevant links

CareSearch – www.caresearch.com.au
 Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing – www.culturaldiversity.com.au/resources/practice-guides/palliative-care
 Residential Aged Care Palliative Approach Toolkit – www.caresearch.com.au/PAToolkit

