Nurses and Muslim patients: two perspectives on Islamic culture in the hospital

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Abstract

Objectives: 1) To find out nurses’ perspectives on their Muslim patients’ cultural aspects. 2) To find out Muslim cultural and religious aspects in the hospital setting from the Muslim patients’ point of view. 3) To contrast nurses and Muslim patients’ perceptions of Muslim religion and culture. Method: Grounded Theory is performed using thorough interviews to collect data. Informants: nurses in hospital units (N=32), Muslim patients admitted into a public hospital in Almería (Spain) (N=37) Results: Nurses. Stereotypes determine their perspectives on Muslim patients’ cultural aspects. Despite not understanding them, they respect them. They perceive great cultural distance from Muslims. Muslim patients. Two main categories arise: variability in the way Islam is interpreted and followed and the fact that religion is left “in a second place”, putting a full recovery from illness before the precepts of Islam. Similarities with Andalusian culture are found. Conclusions: Healthcare providers’ interpretation of Muslim characteristics is determined by stereotypes and prejudice. This contrasts with the heterogeneity found in terms of how the precepts of Islam are followed. In general, nurses are willing to learn about Muslim culture and they deem it positive to have greater cultural understanding and respect in order to improve healthcare.

Keywords: Nursing; Muslim; Migration; Interculturality; Culture.

1. Introduction

The increase in cultural diversity of western countries is a challenge for the healthcare system and professionals. The difficulties of caring for foreign patients not only have to do with occasional communication problems because

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of language barriers, but also with cultural differences between the healthcare practitioner and the patient, who may not share the same rules, values or behaviour models. Without a doubt, discrimination and racism must never be present in healthcare (Boladeras et al, 2007), where the UNESCO (2011) premise should always be respected: defence of cultural diversity is an ethical imperative indissociable from respect for the dignity of the individual.

This multicultural context has lead to this research into the healthcare received by the immigrant population and the relation between nurses and these patients (Plaza del Pino, 2010). First, the relation between nurses and Muslim patients has been analysed from the professionals’ perspective. Later, the patients’ point of view on this aspect has been analysed.

The study focused on Muslim patients since they make up the largest community in Almería (Spain), where the study was conducted. It is estimated that around 100 000 Muslim inhabitants, between 17% and 20% of the total population, live in Almería (Spain), and the largest group come from Morocco (Spanish Statistical Office, 2015). It must be noted that according to several studies, Maghrebian immigrants receive the most negative judgement in Spain (Cea D’Ancona, 2002; Navas et al. 2004).

The present paper compares some of the results and discussions of the two studies already mentioned focusing on the Islamic culture.

2. Objectives

- To find out nurses’ perspectives on the their Muslim patients’ cultural aspects.
- To find out Muslim cultural and religious aspects in the hospital setting from the Muslim patients’ point of view.
- To contrast nurses and Muslim patients’ perceptions of Muslim religious and cultural aspects.

3. Method

A qualitative approach is used since it is the most suitable method to analyse statements and to fully understand the events, taking into account the participants’ situation and culture (de la Cuesta, 2006). The Grounded Theory was used and, following Strauss and Corbin’s methodology (1998), the aim was to understand what is happening and how the actors play their roles (Dick, 2005) in the research situation.

3.1. Data collection

Thorough interviews were carried out where informants chose. In the case of nurses, most of them took place in the hospital, whereas patients were interviewed in their homes. Interviews were recorded and the average duration was 25 minutes both for patients and nurses.

3.2. Informants

First study: Nurses of public hospitals. Participants were selected from nurses with more than one year of seniority trying to include the different hospital departments. Participation was voluntary.

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<th>Older than 40</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</table>

Second study: Muslim men and women admitted into a public hospital in Almería (Spain). Informants of different nationalities, with different levels of Spanish and immigration status, etc. were selected. Participation was voluntary.
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