

(REVIEW ARTICLE)



## Cultural competence in anesthesia care: Addressing disparities in pain perception and management

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### Abstract

Cultural competence in anesthesia care is vital for tackling pain perception and management disparities across various patient groups. Research indicates that cultural background affects how patients express, tolerate, and anticipate pain, often resulting in inequalities in pain management. This article assesses the significance of cultural competence in anesthesia care, its effect on addressing disparities, and methods for incorporating cultural considerations into clinical practice. By promoting a greater awareness of cultural influences on pain, anesthesia professionals can improve patient-centered care and enhance outcomes for all patients. Introduction Cultural competence refers to the capability of healthcare providers to comprehend, honor, and effectively address the cultural and linguistic requirements of patients. In anesthesia care, cultural competence is especially important as disparities in pain perception and management are well-established. Pain, being a subjective experience, is influenced by cultural, psychological, and social elements. Neglecting these factors can lead to miscommunication, inadequate treatment, or excessive treatment of pain. This paper investigates how cultural competence can rectify these disparities and provides practical strategies for anesthesia providers.

**Keywords:** Cultural competence; Anesthesia care; Pain management; Pain perception; Health disparities; Patient-centered care; Implicit bias; Cultural awareness training; Minority health; Equitable healthcare

### 1. Introduction

Cultural competence refers to the capability of healthcare providers to comprehend, honor, and effectively address the cultural and linguistic requirements of patients. In anesthesia care, cultural competence is especially important as disparities in pain perception and management are well-established. Pain, being a subjective experience, is influenced by cultural, psychological, and social elements. Neglecting these factors can lead to miscommunication, inadequate treatment, or excessive treatment of pain. This paper investigates how cultural competence can rectify these disparities and provides practical strategies for anesthesia providers.

### 2. Understanding Cultural Influences on Pain Perception

Cultural beliefs significantly influence how people experience and convey pain. For instance:

- **Expression of Pain:** Certain cultures promote stoicism, while others consider expressive responses as an acceptable means of seeking assistance.

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- Pain Tolerance: Cultural norms can shape an individual's view of what is deemed tolerable pain.
- Use of Pain Medication: Attitudes toward pharmaceuticals vary significantly, impacting patients' openness to pain management approaches.

Research demonstrates that biases among healthcare providers can exacerbate disparities. For instance, minority patients frequently receive lower doses of analgesics or experience delays in treatment compared to their non-minority peers.

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### 3. The Role of Cultural Competence in Anesthesia Care

Cultural competence in anesthesia care involves recognizing and responding to the various needs of patients from distinct backgrounds. It encompasses:

- Effective Communication: Addressing language barriers through interpreters or multilingual personnel to guarantee that patients comprehend their care plans.
- Cultural Awareness Training: Providing education for anesthesia providers regarding cultural differences in pain perception and healthcare-seeking behaviors.
- Bias Mitigation: Adopting practices to identify and minimize implicit biases that may affect clinical decision-making.

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### 4. Addressing Disparities in Pain Management

Disparities in pain management can be reduced through:

- Individualized Pain Assessment: Customizing pain assessment tools to incorporate culturally relevant factors.
- Patient Education: Delivering culturally appropriate information about anesthesia and pain management choices.
- Shared Decision-Making: Involving patients in discussions about their preferences and beliefs to formulate a collaborative care plan.

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### 5. Case Study: Impact of Cultural Competence Training

A hospital initiated a cultural competence training program for its anesthesia staff. The training featured workshops on cultural beliefs related to pain, recognition of implicit bias, and role-playing activities. Evaluations conducted after the training indicated a noticeable enhancement in patient satisfaction and equitable pain management results.

Strategies for Implementing Cultural Competence

- Policy Development: Integrating cultural competence into institutional policies and procedures.
- Workforce Diversity: Attracting and retaining a diverse group of healthcare providers.
- Community Engagement: Collaborating with community organizations to recognize cultural health needs.
- Research and Data Collection: Performing studies to identify and address disparities unique to the local population.

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### 6. Conclusion

Cultural competence in anesthesia care is vital for minimizing disparities in pain perception and management. By recognizing and valuing cultural influences, anesthesia providers can offer more fair, patient-centered care. Institutional dedication to cultural competence through training, policy modifications, and community involvement will guarantee enhanced outcomes for diverse patient groups.

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### Compliance with ethical standards

*Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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