



## How Culturally-Sensitive Care Can Improve Your Bottom Line



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In a globalised world, [Dr. Pepi Burgos](#) has seen first-hand how a **culturally-sensitive approach to patients** can contribute to an effective and efficient use of healthcare resources. As a Lecturer, Researcher and Intercultural Trainer, she tells HealthManagement.org why healthcare managers can't overlook tailored care.

**Healthcare has a well-known mantra: 'The bottom line and best outcomes'. How can taking a culturally sensitive approach contribute to achieving better patient care results at lower costs?**

Taking a culturally sensitive approach can contribute to achieving **better patient outcomes at lower costs** because patients will be satisfied with the care they are receiving as healthcare practitioners will be more knowledgeable about their patients' backgrounds. Also, this is likely to improve patients' trust in their

practitioners and patient satisfaction and adherence.

You might also like: [Value-based Healthcare and the Doctor-Patient Relationship](#)

### **Can you pinpoint some specific examples where you have seen culturally-sensitive skills and strategies play a role in improved patient care and care cost reduction?**

For example, culturally competent health professionals may actually be more skillful in obtaining histories for their (non-Western) patients and therefore making diagnoses. In collectivist cultures, where group needs come before those of an individual, is essential to **gain trust from patients** before discussing what the most appropriate treatment for a patient could be. But, how do you gain this trust? By active listening to your patients, by observing their non-verbal communication and by taking time to work on your patient-practitioner relationship. Gaining trust, listening actively, observing non-verbal communication and working on the relationship are examples of culturally sensitive skills and strategies.

### **How important is it that healthcare managers acknowledge the need for a culturally-sensitive approach?**

Healthcare managers are managers of an organisation that needs to look at [patients as clients](#). If we are determined to follow a patient-centered approach, we need to listen to our patients/clients to navigate these cultural differences which often result in misunderstanding and frustration.

Healthcare managers need to be aware of the **benefits of implementing a culturally-sensitive approach**. Some of these benefits are an improvement in the patient adherence to therapy and health outcomes, which, ultimately is likely to lead to lower costs.

### **Where there are limited resources, where/ how would you recommend management focuses in order to implement skills and strategies?**

Budget and time are real limitations when it comes to implement culturally-sensitive practices, but so are problems with **patient adherence** or misunderstandings between **non-Western patients and practitioners**. These problems may lead to longer treatments or more frequent consultations, what in the long run also leads to higher costs.

My recommendation to health managers is: **invest in the quality of care, apply a culturally sensitive approach and eliminate health disparities**.

Source: HealthManagement.org

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