



Updates & Innovations in Essential Conversations for the Health Care Team

Session Topic: **Culturally Sensitive Care for the Chinese Community**

Presenters: **Dr. Kelvin Lou**
VCH

Wednesday May 15th 2024, 12:00pm - 1:00pm

AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION	RESOURCES
<p>Objectives, Overview and Session Materials</p>	<p>Presenter: Kelvin Lou</p> <p><u>Learning Objectives</u> By the end of the session participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the role that Confucian concepts plays in influencing health care communication. • Know how to reframe health care decisions through the lens of filial piety. • Apply indirect communication strategies. 	
<p>Presentation Key Points</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presentation explores the approach of Cultural curiosity and exploration. • One of the major influences of Chinese culture is a concept called Confucianism, which influences a lot of Chinese thoughts, traditions, and beliefs. This is a school of philosophy developed by a Chinese philosopher by the name Confucius. His viewpoint states that one of the fundamental building blocks of society are relationships be it relationships between individuals, within the family, the community and beyond. Further explained that how a society maintains harmony is that everybody has their predefined roles and by doing these 	



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roles one can maintain harmony in the society. Confucianism can simply be defined as a set of rules and protocols that we all follow in order to build harmony in the society.

- Some of the cultural concepts explored that are relevant to health care: a preference for collective decision-making as opposed to having an individual making their own individual decisions, preference for indirect communication style is another cultural concept that was discussed. Another cultural concept is Filial piety which is very relevant to many health care settings. This is defined as a set of rules that outlines the roles children should play towards their parents. It basically explains how the children should look after the parents as they get older.
- Going back to some of the Confucius roots, there are strong moral implications about being filial where if we think about the family being a fundamental building block of society and one being unfilial in a way is messing with the very fabric of the society and that carries strong judgment.
- The presenter illustrated a case story of a 90-year-old female who has metastatic cancer currently living at home and things have become quite challenging. The family is really struggling to look after her despite their best efforts. In talking to the patient, she is feeling frustrated like why her children can't respect her wishes to stay at home and why do they keep bringing up the topic of hospice, also feeling like she's being abandoned by her children. In talking with the children, they on the other hand want to honor their mom's wishes, but they're also seeing that she's not comfortable and she's suffering at home. How does this communication barrier get tackled? - Thinking of this as a lack of medical information and using the approach of giving more medical information, explaining how hospitals can make medical sense, the supports that can be offered through hospice, etc.
- By using the lens of filial piety, it becomes clear that the issue isn't just about providing more medical information, it's about tapping into the emotional core of the conversation so that medical professionals can support the process where the family can make both an informed and a loving decision for the family.
- In the health care context, filial piety can often be reframed as the balance between obedience and the protection of the ones we love and leaning into this cultural understanding and providing medical expertise to complement this worldview. It is this



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	<p>distinction that allows to unlock the conversation and promote harmony within the family and allow for true informed decision making.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other ways to move the conversation forward is using indirect communication tools. Conveying medical information but intentionally taking a more roundabout way of doing things. This tends to create space and distance so that the other person can hear what is being said. Being too direct, sometimes can cause trauma and might be one of the reasons why it will shut down a conversation because a painful subject is being confronted directly. By communicating indirectly, it allows people to consider what we're saying without feeling threatened. It's not just about delivering medical information but also about trying to work our way to the heart of the conversation, understanding the real concerns there. So, how do we do this? One of the very powerful ways we can do this is communicating through stories. • Stories are a great way to communicate and a way to share information indirectly. Other ways that we can communicate indirectly are- using celebrities or public events, promoting deliberation vs forcing decision, etc. Using a form of narrative and story is a good way to kind of tackle some of these very important and deep-seated concerns. • A lot of these cultural aspects even though we're focusing on the Chinese community are strong parallels with many other cultures. The goal is to achieve some level of understanding so that it opens up the playing field for more creative and perhaps more holistic options out there. • In summary, the presenter highlighted the role of filial piety and how important it is to many people in the community and the strong influence of filial piety on decision making. Also touched on how medical professionals can use their medical expertise to help facilitate and reframe their duty in a way that incorporates important medical information decisions and allows for a more holistic view of the issue. Finally, using indirect communication tools allows more room to let the patient understand where we're coming from and also have a full-time understanding of how they see the world. 	
<p>Discussion</p>	<p>Q: How do we present the concept of hospice. A: There's so much stigma around the concept of hospice and in trying to be culturally sensitive, it could be difficult and challenging. It is such a powerful word but addressing the symbolic aspect of that work can be so helpful. There's also the cultural stigma where hospitals can often be</p>	



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	<p>conflicted with long-term care and that if you abandon your loved one into long-term care, you're not being filial and foregoing your filial duty. Also throwing in the extra element of approaching end of life and that in itself is explosive and a way to defuse that is not necessarily just focusing on the language, but really getting them to share the underlying concern. If it's abandonment, we can reframe the duty as protection and not necessarily as abandonment.</p> <p>Q: To what extent do you think language barriers play a part in this? Translators for these sorts of delicate conversations can feel so impersonal.</p> <p>A: Having an in-person translator can make all the difference in the world. For very tough conversations, there is a better success in terms of actually building some human connection if an in-person translator is used. Also getting to know your translators could be helpful.</p> <p>Q: How do you address a firm reluctance to have a home death and have the family carrying the burden of caring in the home?</p> <p>A: Every family is different. Death carries some pretty serious cultural implications where it can be considered extremely bad luck to have a death in the home. Trying to understand the underlying values can be so helpful.</p> <p>Q: Curious about how to best approach family patients when families ask staff not to tell their loved one that they are in hospice once they've arrived. To not use that word instead that it's a facility like a hospital.</p> <p>A: There is this very strong belief where if you tell too much information, especially around sensitive topics, you can take away the hope that someone has that sustains them. There is a belief where if you disclose a diagnosis, you disclose like a hospice type setting, they would get into this depressive state that ends up short in their life. Understanding the underlying principles of why someone doesn't want to fully disclose their loved one can be super helpful and further allows different ways to engage.</p> <p>In summary, asking patients open ended questions and listening and just having a Confucius approach to patients in general and being thoughtful and sensitive and open-minded is just an outstanding approach to any patient.</p>	
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	The presentation is applicable to many cultures as it focuses on the patient and the family as a unit which is very sensitive and dynamic which can change between patients as time evolves.	
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Link to the Video recording: https://youtu.be/XQjp6h4fCrQ?si=L7qLUxJoArY1sytQ• Book Title: The 5 Mother Languages	