

# Filipino Culture



PRIDE IN OUR DIVERSITY

The following information is provided to help you become more aware of your patients' and coworkers' views, traditions, and actions. While you can use this information as a guide, keep in mind that all people within a culture are **not** the same. Be sure to ask your patients and their families about specific beliefs, practices, and customs that may be relevant and important during medical treatment and hospitalization.

When describing the Filipino culture, the following information could apply to Filipinos visiting from the Philippines, first generation Filipino Americans, or ensuing generation of Filipino Americans. Each piece of information does not necessarily apply to all Filipinos.



## general information

- When addressing an older person, ask the patient how he/she wishes to be addressed. Using Mr., Mrs., or Miss with last names shows respect. In the Philippines, first names are preceded with "Aling" for women and "Mang" for men (such as Aling Rosa or Mang Tomas).
- Filipinos are, for the most part, warm, fun-loving people with a sense of humor. You can casually speak with both older and younger people, and may tell jokes, depending on the situation.
- Family is an important part of the Filipino culture. Patients may wish to have family members present 24 hours a day.
- Filipinos appreciate hearing non-Filipinos speak words in their native language. Approximately 30% of Chicago's Filipino population do not speak English well.
- 80% of the Filipino American population is Roman Catholic. (Generally, the others are Protestants and Muslims.) They may have Patron Saints to whom they pray for recovery. When they are praying the Novena or the Rosary, you should not interrupt them, if possible.

## *inter-personal relationships*

### **relationship roles**

- v Filipino families tend to be matriarchal. Although the men appear to be the family leaders and the main money earners, the women usually control the household budgets. In most families, both parents play an active role in raising children. This is one of the main reasons why Filipinos don't believe in divorce.
- v Male patients may prefer male doctors and nurses. Female patients may prefer female doctors and nurses.

### **decision-making**

- v It is important to involve the family in treatment decisions if this is what the patient wants.
- v Family members consult with each other to make decisions and then approach the doctor as a group. If there is a disagreement, they may look to the family member with the most knowledge to make the decision. It is important to include the patient in decision-making discussions unless the patient states otherwise. This statement then should be documented in the patient's chart.

### **conflict resolution**

- v Filipinos usually are very agreeable people. They try to avoid conflicts.
- v When conflicts arise, it is not unusual for the elders to make the decisions and the others to abide by them. Younger members seldom question the decision of the elders.

### **personal & cultural traditions**

- v Filipinos are friendly and open.
- v Filipino patients have close personal space zones with people whom they know well.
- v If Filipinos want the doctor to share their sense of family, they may stop close to the physician or touch the physician, such as holding onto an arm. In these instances, you should not move out of the personal space zone or pull away from the touch. Such actions might be interpreted as rude.

### **gestures**

- v Filipinos may greet each other with a flash of their eyebrows (quickly lifting their eyebrows up and down).
- v The Philippines is quite Westernized, so Filipinos generally understand that the "thumbs up" and "okay" signs signify that everything is alright, nodding the head up and down means "yes," and moving your head from side to side means "no" or disapproval.
- v If a Filipino distrusts you or doesn't believe what you're saying, he/she may give you a frown or a disdainful look.
- v Filipinos usually are very gracious when receiving and giving compliments. Often, if you show a liking to or admire something they own, they will give it to you.

## *treatment issues*

### **medical treatment**

- ✓ Because the doctor is seen as an authority figure, he/she should be the one to give any good or bad news. The patient should be asked how he/she desires to have information about his/her condition shared. Generally, bad news may be delivered to the family first, and then to the patient in the presence of the family. However, this should be discussed with the patient before the situation arises, and the discussion should be documented.
- ✓ Older patients are more likely to be afraid of doctors and hospitals, so they sometimes deny they are ill. The doctor may speak with a family member whom they trust so he/she can speak to the patient, according to the patient's wishes.
- ✓ Religion plays a role in resolving health matters. Filipino patients usually enjoy visits from a priest or a minister for moral and spiritual support. Ask patients if they would like their priest or one of our chaplains to visit them. Family members usually go to church/chapel to pray and sometimes will have a "mass" for the patients.
- ✓ Filipinos who have been residing in the U.S. generally are not superstitious. Those who reside in remote places in the Philippines usually are superstitious. They may believe that bad spirits have caused their illness.
- ✓ Filipino patients like to be attended to, pampered, and treated with respect.

### **Responses to pain**

- ✓ Older patients may be afraid of addiction to pain medication. If you're administering pain medication, you should emphasize the reasons for taking it.
- ✓ Younger patients may not be as tolerant of pain as older patients. They may want painkillers to ease their pain.

### **emotions**

- ✓ Filipinos express their emotions openly.
- ✓ Filipino patients usually respond to a human touch, a personalized approach, and a caring attitude.

### **food**

- ✓ Patients may want their families to bring in Filipino dishes and delicacies. Let the patients know if they have diet restrictions.
- ✓ Filipino dishes reflect the historical influences of a number of cultures: Malay, Islamic, Chinese, Spanish, Mexican and American. Traditional main courses include lechon (roasted pig with liver sauce) and adobo (pork, chicken, or seafood stew cooked in vinegar).
- ✓ Most dishes are eaten with rice.
- ✓ Filipinos are fond of fruit.
- ✓ Roman Catholics abstain from meat (pork, beef, lamb, and chicken) on Ash Wednesday and Fridays of Lent. Fish is acceptable. Members of the older generation usually fast during the Holy Week, especially on Good Friday and Black Saturday, but this is followed by a feast on Easter Sunday. Exceptions are made for hospital patients, but you should ask your patient whether he/she intends to fast, particularly if your patient needs a high protein diet.

### **death**





- ✓ Roman Catholic patients may want to receive the Last Rites, also known as the Extreme Unction -- the act of anointing as a rite of consecration or healing.
- ✓ The whole family may wish to be present as a patient is dying.
- ✓ There are no known special customs regarding amputation, cremations, or transplants.
- ✓ Filipinos tend to be emotional about death and will likely pray and cry.

**g l o s s a r y**

word	meaning
Ate	Older sister
Gusto	I want
Hi or Hello	Hello
Hindi	No
Kumusta?	How are you?
Kuy	Older brother
Mabuti	Fine
Maskit?	Does it hurt?
Nanay	Mother
OO	Yes
Paalam	Good-bye
Pagkain	Food
Paki	Please
Pamilya	Family
Saan	Where
Salamat	Thank you
Tatay	Father
Tubig	Water
Walang snuman	You are welcome

*did you know*



-  There are approximately 30,000 Filipino Americans in the city of Chicago and 65,000 in the metropolitan area, according to the 1990 Census.
-  Approximately 70% to 80% of Filipinos in the city of Chicago are first generation Filipino American.
-  Filipinos are the fourth largest group to immigrate to the Chicago area (after Mexicans, Poles, and Indians).
-  The Philippines is comprised of numerous islands. It has eight major languages and as many as 121 dialects, but Tagalog (the language of Manila) is the Philippine national language. Filipinos differ in characteristics and customs based on their regional group.

## important holidays & dates

Event	Date	Description
Name Days	Varies	Greek Christians are named after saints. Each saint has a day (or series of days) each year when he/she is celebrated. Greeks (primarily men) who share a saint's name often celebrate their saint's religious holiday with a social gathering.
Lent	40 days before Easter	Marks a period of preparation and penitence before Easter. Generally, there are food restrictions during this period
Easter	Date varies, usually an April Sunday	Commemorates the resurrection of Christ.
Flores de Mayo	Month of May	Celebrates the Blessed Virgin Mary
Philippine Week	Week before, on, or after June 12	Marks the date the Philippines won their independence from Spain
Christmas	December 25	Marks the birth of Christ. (The Christmas season begins on December 16.)
Rizal Day	December 30	Celebrates the memory of Dr. Jose P. Rizal, the Philippines' national hero.

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