

Maternity Clinical Assignment Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness

Nurses are required to develop increased cultural competence in caring for their patients because of the diverse and increasingly multicultural society what we live in. Cultural Competence includes expertise in cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. **Cultural awareness** may be defined as the ability to identify values, beliefs, and behaviors of cultures that are different from one's own, and **cultural sensitivity** is the ability to incorporate the patient's cultural perspective into nursing assessments and to modify nursing care in order to be as congruent or as compatible as possible with the patient's own perspective (Burkhardt and Nathaniel *Ethics and Issues in Contemporary Nursing 3rd edition, Thompson Delmar series, 2008*). These authors go on to state: "We must be aware that the health care system is a different culture from that of most of the patients served by the system. The language, values, norms, behaviors, rituals, and environment are generally unfamiliar to those who seek its services. Even people who belong to the same dominant culture in society as their health care providers are often strangers when they enter institutions of the system. For those who do not belong to the same dominant culture, negotiating the system can be a formidable task" (page 448).

The maternity setting provides many rich opportunities for the nurse to challenge and develop his or her cultural competence.

Assignment: choose a situation which occurred during this rotation that challenged you to think about the importance of cultural competence. This situation may involve one in which you were involved directly or one which you observed. Please describe the situation briefly and answer the following questions:

1. How was this issue of cultural diversity evident in this situation? Please be specific.
2. How was the situation handled? Did you, the nurse, or other practitioner demonstrate cultural sensitivity? Please explain your answer.
3. As a result of thinking about this situation, how might this situation be better addressed in the future. Please explain your answer.