

Privacy, Dignity & Respect for Cultural & Religious Beliefs

The following information is presented with a view to providing faith-related information to help healthcare professionals deal with Muslim service-users sensitively and to assist healthcare providers in their efforts of making reasonable adjustments in compliance with the Religion and Belief regulations of the Race Relations Amendments Act.

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Requirements of practising Muslim patients

Daily Prayer & Worship

For Muslims, prayer is a regular and disciplined act of worship in which they humbly submit to God both mentally and physically.

In prayer they praise and glorify God. They seek mercy, forgiveness and guidance from Him. The prayer takes the form of a series of rites which include standing, bowing, prostrating and sitting, and where memorised verses from the Qur'an are recited.

Prayer is obligatory five times a day at a stated periods; at dawn (Fajr), at mid-day (Zuhr), late afternoon (Asr), after sunset (Maghrib), and late evening before going to bed (Isha).

Muslims pray in the Mosque in congregation where they assemble and stand in rows behind the Imam who leads the prayer. Prayers can also be conducted at home or any place where it is convenient and clean.

In the hospital, it would benefit Muslim patients (and hospital staff) if a quiet, clean room was allocated to them for this purpose. If a patient is not mobile or she may wish to pray on the bed or chair in a sitting position or pray near the bedside using a prayer mat. The patient may wish to draw the curtains during the prayer for privacy. This would usually take no more than 10 to 15 minutes.

Ablution Facility

An Ablution is the term used for ritual washing (known as "wudhu"). This is nothing to do with the Ablution vessel. Ablution must be carried out before praying or reciting the Qur'an. It takes the form of washing the hands; the arms; passing wet hands over the head; and lastly washing the feet.



All Mosques have a special area where a person can carry out Ablution.

This facility is purpose built and takes into account the need to wash the feet, hence seating is usually lower. A normal wash hand basin is adequate for performing the Ablution but a person may need help if they are frail and elderly or weak.



Also, Muslims prefer to wash in running water for bathing purposes and would therefore prefer a shower to a bath filled with water. A bucket and a jug could also serve the purpose.

If a patient is not able to do the ablution or can not use water because of their medical condition then they would perform "dry ablution" known as *Tayammum*.

This consists of the patient stroking his/her dry hands on to a slate or small piece of stone and wiping their hands on to the face and stroking one more time and then wiping their arms right first and then the left. Spiritually they will feel they have cleansed themselves ready for prayer.

The Prayer Mat

A person who offers five times obligatory prayer will no doubt take their own Prayer mat. But keeping a few in stock will mean that the hospital is being courteous, and demonstrates a religious awareness.



Also, in the case of emergency admissions, the patient may not have had the opportunity to pack their belongings properly.

They find themselves in a state of helplessness wishing to seek forgiveness and help from God.

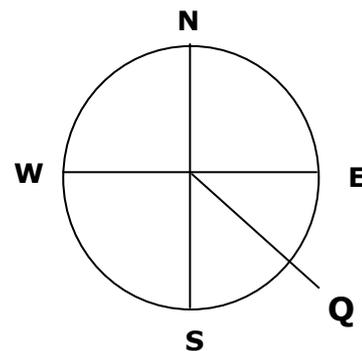
Praying, as mentioned earlier, is one of the fundamental duties of a Muslim. If a prayer mat is not available a clean towel or clean folded sheet can be used instead.

The Direction of the "Qibla"

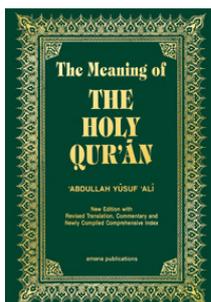
For a Muslim to be able to pray, they must face the South Easterly direction towards the Qibla in Makkah, which is a city in Saudi Arabia. Hence, keeping a compass is essential for this purpose.

Once the direction of the Qibla is known, it may be beneficial to put a sign up on the wall showing the directions of the Qibla permanently.

This saves duplication and the need for a compass each time a new Muslim patient is admitted.



Holy Book



The Holy Qur'an is the most important book for Muslims. However, as with the Prayer mat a person would probably bring their own Qur'an in the Hospital.

The Qur'an should only be handled after performing the ablution or "wudhu" (ritual washing). Copies of the Qur'an may be available at the Chaplaincy office as with the holy books of other religions.

Although the Qur'an in Arabic text is mainly used for recitation for

It is important to handle the Qur'an with care and respect.

Holy Days & Festivals

Ramadan: the 9th month of the Islamic Calendar.

Muslims fast for the whole month from dawn to dusk. Fasting means abstention from food or drink, smoking and sexual activity. Fasting is not obligatory for the sick, the very old, the very young, for pregnant or breastfeeding women. The sick should make up the days they have missed at some other time. During Ramadan Muslims will spend many hours in prayer or reading the Qur'an.

There are two major festivals in the Islamic year. The first is celebrated on the day immediately after the end of the Ramadan fast. Thus it is known as Idu-l-Fitr, Festival of breaking of the fast.

The second major festival is Idu-l-Adha, which is celebrated to commemorate Prophet Abraham's (pbuh), willingness to obey God's command to sacrifice his one and only son Ismaeel (pbuh). This festival also coincides with key rituals during the Muslim pilgrimage to Makkah known as Hajj.

Idu-l-Fitr: Muslims put on their best clothes and attend the Mosques in the morning to pray in thanksgiving for the blessings they have received from God in the form of the Qur'an and the keeping of the Fast. They also pay the Sadaqah al-Fitr (welfare due) for the poor. This is paid by the head of the family on behalf of all the members of the household, including a newborn baby, and given to the poorer members of society to enable them to participate in the festival. Currently, the rate is fixed at £1 per each individual.

Muslims offer their greetings of Id Mubarak (Happy Id) and Assalamo Allaikum (peace be upon you). Idu-l-Fitr is the Muslim community's assertion of unity and family solidarity. It is a community and family celebration where Muslims cook delicious food, visit and embrace each other. It is also a special occasion for the children, who receive presents, new clothes, money and greetings.

Idu-l-Adha: This is the momentous event in the Islamic calendar and commemorates the time, 4000 years ago, when Prophet Abraham (pbuh) was at the command of his Lord, willing to sacrifice his own son Ismaeel (pbuh) as an act of obedience, devotion and submission to the will of God. God accepted a lamb in the place of his son Ismaeel as a symbol of his devotion. Muslims throughout the world symbolise their willingness to sacrifice their life and property in the name of God and the cause of Islam.

On this day also Muslims put on their best clothes and attend the congregational prayers in the morning. Also those who can afford to sacrifice an animal and share the meat among family, friends and the poor.

Diet & Hygiene

Halal Meals

Many hospitals with a large Muslim population now provide Halal meals. However, it is important when carrying out patients' surveys to find out about its take-up and quality of the food.



Hospitals may spend proportionately more money on Halal foods but do they get eaten by the patient?

Despite the availability of Halal meals many still bring their own food from home. This is because the home made food is not only Halal but more 'culturally' appropriate. For example, Pakistani Muslims eat more Chapattis with curry as their staple diet whilst Bangladeshis will have rice as their main meal.

The way it is cooked, the traditional herbs and spices used, also make a difference in the quality of the food. However, it is important to bear in mind that some second generation Muslims, will have an English meal; i.e. vegetables, fish, rice etc.

They will need to avoid pork and other impermissible foods. It is important to be aware that even in the cooking process, any meat or meat products such as gelatine are avoided.

The use of separate utensils when cooking or serving the Halal and non-Halal food is essential.

A Cleaning Vessel

Many Muslims regard the use of toilet paper as insufficient in the terms of hygiene and wash with water after using the toilet. Therefore a cleansing vessel is used for this purpose.



This is a simple vessel which has a long spout like a watering can for plants. However, in the absence of one, a plastic jug or an ordinary plastic watering can may be used.

The vessel is used in the toilet for washing the private parts with water after urination or defecation. Hospital staff may already be aware of this requirement and patients often bring their own ablution vessel. However, some hospitals have now seen the importance of this need and have established this facility.

The Hospital Infection Control Nurses would advice on how to use and store the vessel. They would require that the vessel be hung up on a hook to allow any water remaining to drain out.

Muslims will always use their left hand for toileting and their right hand for eating purposes etc. This information is useful, therefore, for medical staff when choosing the patient's hand for intravenous drugs etc. (Many Muslims would prefer the right hand to be used but it would be advisable to ask).

Gender Issues

For Muslims, modesty in dress is very important.

A male must cover his body from navel to knees whilst the female is required to cover her whole body, apart from face and hands. The clothing must not be see-through nor tight fitting.

It is therefore very important to adopt operation gowns which respect the above requirement. This problem is of great concern for female patients when they are in transit from their bed to the operating theatre. The clothing should be such that it can cover the body of the patient to avoid any discomfort and embarrassment. Some hospitals have allowed for this requirement.



The integration of the sexes is not allowed in Islam and a practising Muslim will feel very uncomfortable if their bed is next to or near to a patient who is not of the same gender.

This is particularly insensitive for the female patients. For them it is not only insensitive but also ethically and morally wrong.

Visiting

Visiting a sick relative or friend is regarded as a virtuous act for Muslims and is greatly rewarded by God. For this reason there may be a large number of people visiting the patient.

It is part of the Muslim culture to visit the sick either in hospital or at home and to attend the funeral of those who have died. In fact to gain the spiritual benefit most people will attend a funeral of a Muslim even if they are not acquainted with the person.

For this reason, hospitals may need to take into account the large number of people visiting at the same time. Of course a standard needs to be set and certain criteria established to avoid disruption, but hospitals should take into account this information.

Birth

Birth ceremonies include the rites of Adhan and Iqamat, shaving of the head, naming and circumcision.

The adhan is the Muslim call to prayer. When a Muslim baby is born, they are bathed and the adhan is said softly into their right ear. The iqamat is said into the left ear. If the baby is in an incubator a special instrument will need to be used.

Soon after birth, a small amount of date, sugar or a drop of honey is placed in the baby's mouth.

The baby is named on the 7th day after birth. Also on the 7th day after the birth, the head of the baby is shaved and all boys are circumcised.

Death

Where the death of a Muslim patient appears imminent, the relatives, or in their absence a member from the local Mosque committee, should be informed and be given facilities to perform the customary religious rites.

At this stage, the simple practice which is followed is to sit near the bed of the patient and to read some verses from the Qur'an and pray for the peaceful departure of the soul.

A patient on the point of death should, if possible, be turned to face in the direction of the Ka'bah in Makkah (A south easterly direction in the UK).

The patient should be turned onto their right side facing south east. When a patient is unable to be turned, they may be placed on their back with the feet in the south easterly direction and their head slightly raised.

If the patient is in a state of consciousness, those present at the bedside will like him/her to recite the Shahadah-the declaration of faith: "La-Elaaha illa-Allah, Muhamadur-Rasoolullah" (There is none worthy of worship except Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah).

This is done to invoke the blessings of Allah and in the hope that Allah will accept their life as a Muslim and forgive their sins in the hereafter.

When the patient has passed away, recitation of the Qur'an ceases in their presence.

Immediately after death, relatives will want to:

- Close the eyes to the deceased
- Turn the body to the right and if possible towards the Qibla, the south easterly direction of prayer
- Flex the joints of the arms and legs to stop them becoming rigid to enable washing and shrouding

At all times the deceased's body must be modestly covered. If no relative or community member is immediately available, they will appreciate nursing staff undertaking the above. The corpse should be handed over to the relatives or the Muslim community of the locality who will make arrangements for the washing, shrouding and burial according to Islamic regulations.

Muslims do not usually bury the corpse in a coffin, but if special circumstances apply or the law requires this, then Muslims will not object to adhering to the law.

Islam recommends that burial takes place as soon as possible, preferably within 24 hours. Family and community members will be grateful for the rapid release of the body.

A post-mortem should not be carried out unless required by law as this causes delay and distress. In fact, post-mortems without the existence of compelling medical or legal circumstances amounts to desecration of the body and must be avoided as a general rule.



It's for this reason that Muslims like to take custody of the remains as early as possible.

If relatives or members of the Muslim community are not readily available to take charge of the body, it may be kept in the hospital mortuary for a short period of time. In handling the body, however, care should be taken not to offend Muslim ethics.

The female body should be handled by the female staff and male corpse by the male staff where at all possible.

Chaplains



Most hospitals will have a chaplaincy team. The Chaplaincy has a contact name and number to be called upon when requested or alternatively the Muslim chaplain can be contacted through the switchboard. The importance of the visiting Chaplain means the patient can benefit from seeing someone sharing the same faith and therefore able to meet patient's spiritual needs.

If you would like to find out more about Islam and the Muslim Culture, then please log on to our website www.aksaa.co.uk to learn about our one day "Introduction to Islam and the Muslim Culture Course" which incorporates a visit to a Mosque local to you.

The course is professionally structured and designed specifically for Non-Muslim public and private sector workers.

For further information please contact AKSAA Ltd on
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