

## **What do I want the doctors to know about honoring my religious/cultural beliefs both while I am sick and/or dying?**

I am practicing \_\_\_\_\_ religion and/or am part of \_\_\_\_\_ culture. I would like my religion's/culture's teachings to be included in the thought process/explicitly followed when making medical and end-of-life decisions for me. [Circle the right word(s) to describe how strictly your religion's/culture's teachings should be followed.]

If there are any questions regarding what my faith/culture would say about my healthcare decisions, please speak with my faith/cultural leader, \_\_\_\_\_.

His/Her contact information is:

- Telephone \_\_\_\_\_
- Email \_\_\_\_\_

I don't agree with the following teachings of my faith/culture:

In my religion/culture, there are important rules/rituals that need to be followed in order for healing to occur. I would want the following done for me:

In my religion/culture, there are important rules/rituals that need to be followed when a person is dying. I would want the following done for me:

# **Questions your Decision Maker(s) and Doctors Might Want to Consider When Making Your Medical Decisions**

## **Religious or Spiritual Questions**

### **The patient's religious beliefs:**

- What is the patient's faith or belief system? (It may be a traditional religion, a personal spiritual connection or no religion.)
- Is the patient actively practicing his or her religion or spirituality?
- Are the doctors aware of the patient's beliefs? If not, what do I need to tell the doctors?
- Does the patient's belief system play a role in his or her other life decisions?

### **Religion and healthcare:**

- Does the patient's belief system play a role in his or her healthcare decisions?
- What does the religion say about the obligation to keep fighting and to stay alive, regardless of the outcome?
- Does the patient's religion say what can and cannot be chosen when it comes to healthcare decisions?
- Does the patient's religion have rules about how the body can be treated?
- Are there certain fasting or food restrictions in the religion?
- Do I need to ask questions about what services may or may not be provided at a religiously affiliated hospital or clinic?

### **Religious community:**

- Can the religious community provide comfort and support for the patient?
- Do I need to call in the patient's religious leader to help make these decisions?

### **Religion and death and dying:**

- What gives the patient's life meaning or purpose?
- What does the patient's religion say about death and dying?
- Does the patient's religion have certain rituals or prayers that are part of the healing or dying process?
- Before the patient dies, should certain things be done in preparation, either spiritually or physically?
- After the patient dies, should certain things be done to prepare and respect the body?
- Is there a hospital chaplain that I can turn to for help?

**No religious beliefs:**

- How can I show this person respect without using religion?
- How can this person be comforted while dying, without using religion?
- What values and personal beliefs of the patient can guide me when making these decisions?

**Religious beliefs of the decision maker:**

- When I am making decisions for the patient, how does my religion affect my decision making?
- Am I remembering to respect the beliefs of the patient and to not impose my own religious beliefs? (It is your responsibility to make sure that others involved in the person's care are not imposing their own religious beliefs on the decision making process.)

**Cultural Questions****The culture of the patient:**

- How much does the patient follow the rules of his or her culture?
- What would the patient say about his or her cultural values and how they would apply in this situation?
- What is the patient's view of the illness in the context of his or her life?
- How would a doctor from the patient's culture handle this situation?
- How would a doctor from the patient's country handle this situation?
- Are there fears, concerns or misperceptions about the proposed treatments because of cultural beliefs?
- Does the patient want to be told the truth about the illness or would the person rather not know?

**Choosing the decision maker:**

- What does the culture say about who should be the decision maker?
- Should the decision maker be one person or a group of people?

**Family involvement:**

- What does the patient or the family say would help in this situation?
- Are there community resources available to help the patient when he or she is discharged?

**Alternative medicine and healers:**

- Is the patient going to a healer, herbalist, spiritual healer or other person for help?
- Do you need to call in a healer or someone to pray?
- Does the patient trust Western medicine?

- Does the patient want to receive the medicines or alternative medications that are used in the patient's country or culture?
- Is the patient taking alternative medications?
- Do I need to tell the doctor the truth about the alternative medications or treatments the patient is receiving outside the doctor's care? (I would recommend telling the truth so your doctor can keep your loved one safe from any side effects of combining what your loved one is taking and what the doctor is prescribing.)

### **Culture and healthcare:**

- Are there certain things the patient can do or not do to get better because of the rules in the culture?
- Are there certain things the patient can eat or not eat to get better?
- Does the patient typically show pain, or does this individual prefer to be brave and accept pain and suffering?
- Are there gender restrictions on who can take care of or touch the patient? If so, what would be okay?
- How would this person want to be shown respect?

### **Language barriers:**

- Does this person speak the same language as the healthcare team, or should a trained medical interpreter be used?
- Are the forms and written information available in the patient's language?
- Can the patient read the forms and the written information about the disease and treatment options?

### **Culture and death and dying:**

- Are there cultural healing or dying rituals that need to be performed?
- After the person's death, are there rituals that need to be performed or are there certain ways that the body needs to be treated?

### **The decision maker's cultural beliefs:**

- When I am making decisions for the patient, how does my culture affect my decision making?
- Am I remembering to use the culture of the patient and to not impose my own cultural beliefs?
- What else do I need to understand about this person's culture so that I can make good decisions?