

Recommendations for Achieving Effective Health Encounters with Indigenous Patients*

Clinical Care Delivery

- Be informed on indigeneity: knowledgeable of Indigenous history, Indigenous people in the region, and basic cultural beliefs and practices.
- Acknowledge settler-colonial trauma and its effect on the health and well-being of Indigenous patients, and acknowledge healthcare settings as sources of trauma due to discrimination and build relationships accordingly.
- Provide bias and stigma-free, (e.g., race, disability, mental health, substance abuse, cardiometabolic syndromes), quality, and culturally humble care.
- Assess and treat modern-day and historical trauma.
- Assess Indigenous linguistic and cultural health needs and beliefs and incorporate them into a treatment plans.
- Support Indigenous beliefs and lifeways in the hospital and clinic.
- Consider the whole patient system in a treatment plan and include family (patient-defined) needs, community needs, tribal needs.
- Consider Indigenous beliefs and resources in a treatment plan. For example, be familiar with community resources for Indigenous people (e.g., social activities, ceremonies, traditional medicine people for referral).
- Provide a thorough explanation of diagnosis and treatment and ensure that the patient understands the diagnosis and treatment plan, including information about medications.
- Provide opportunities for patient feedback, and actively check on patient satisfaction. Did the patient receive what they came to the clinic for? Do they believe you listened to and understood their concerns?
- Follow up with patients in a timely manner after the appointment.

Patient Provider Relationship

- Build a *real* relationship with your patient. Positive provider attributes include: respect, kindness, care, and understanding.
- Allow and use appropriate humor.
- Reduce patient-provider hierarchy by using cultural humility techniques (e.g., What are my own cultural identities and how do they shape my experience? What assumptions and biases am I bringing to this interaction? What do I need to know about this patient's culture and beliefs to provide appropriate care?)
- Acknowledge and validate the expertise of Indigenous patients over their bodies and life experiences. Engage in shared decision making (e.g., co-create treatment plans).
- Notice and praise patients for work towards and success around positive health behaviors.

Administrative Practices and Policies

- Provide timely services (e.g., appointments, medication).
- Provide care first, bill later.
- Provide expanded, Indigenous-centered, integrated care (including medical, dental, behavioral health, substance abuse treatment, social needs, family needs, community needs, and cultural needs)
 - Provide traditional Indigenous medicine.
- Ensure continuity of care by providing an environment that will reduce provider turnover and burnout.

*Checklist adapted from Lewis ME, Wildcat S, Anderson A. [Visioning an Effective Health Encounter: Indigenous Healthcare Experiences and Recommendations for Health Professionals](#). *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2023;20(20):6917. Published 2023 Oct 13. doi:10.3390/ijerph20206917