The Muslim Patient

Objectives:

- Review Basics of Islam (which will guide your care) and give us a better understanding
- Things to remember when taking care of a Muslim patient, especially females
- Pitfalls to avoid
The Muslim Patient

- Disclosure-
- I am a Muslim, other than that we are good!
The Muslim Patient

- Third largest Faith/Religion in the US.
- 3.4 million, expected to double by 2050
- Fastest growing religion in the world
- Islam – simplest definition is Peace and Submission to God
- Muslim – “Believer” or someone who attains peace through submission to God
The Muslim Patient

**Islamic Tenets of Faith:**

1. Belief in One God (Allah)
2. Belief in Angels of God
3. Belief in Prophets/Messengers of God
4. Belief in the scriptures revealed by God
5. Belief in the Day of Accountability
6. Belief in a Life after Death (Heaven and Hell)

**Five Pillars of Islam:**

1. Declaration of faith
2. Obligatory 5 Daily Prayers
3. Giving to charity/poor
4. Fasting in the month of Ramadan (sunset to sunrise)
5. Pilgrimage to Mecca (health and wealth)
The Muslim Patient

Medical Care and Exam

- Modesty and respect towards opposite gender
- Same sex provider is always optimal
- Wearing a headscarf / “hijab” (women with women do not have to cover up, easier to examine)
- Avoid touching without asking – including stethoscope
- Keep interaction comfortable
- Remember to knock – and wait – may be undressing
The Muslim Patient

Medical Care and Exam

They may want to keep their traditional long gown ("abaya") on as most hospital gowns do not cover entire body – the body is considered sacred and private - please respect
The Muslim Patient
Ramadaan

- A holy month of fasting
- 9th month of the lunar calendar lasting 29-30 days
- 2018- May 15-June 14th (-10 days earlier)
- One of the 5 pillars of Islam and a religious obligation on all healthy adult Muslims
- Muslims fast refrain from eating, drinking, sexual relations, smoking, lying, backbiting and all vices from dawn until sunset. (includes no water or gum)
The purpose of Ramadaan is to build God-consciousness by temporarily refraining from fulfilling basic needs and desires, while focusing on spiritual, emotional and physical well-being through discipline, prayer and fasting.

Another purpose is to build empathy, sympathy and compassion for those less fortunate and appreciate one's blessings.

Aim at developing closeness and gratefulness towards God.

“Ramadan Kareem!” – means Happy Ramadaan

Followed by a celebration called “Eid”
The Muslim Patient
Ramadaan

As Physicians, we must promote:

- Eating a well-balanced pre-dawn and evening meal during each day of the Ramadaan fast.
  - Pre-dawn meal is called *suhoor*.
  - Evening meal is called *iftaar*.

- Emphasize complex carbohydrates that release energy more slowly while fasting (e.g. wheat, oats, beans, lentils, dates, etc.)

- Increase fiber-rich foods that digest slowly (e.g. bran, whole-grain cereals, whole-grain bread, fruits, etc.)

- Avoid heavily processed fats, foods and high-glycemic carbs (such as refined flour or sugar, white bread, or white rice, etc.)
The Muslim Patient
Ramadaan

What about the fasting Muslim patient and medications?

- If medications are withheld (HTN? DM? Seizures?):
  - Hyperglycemia
  - Diabetic ketoacidosis
  - Hyperosmolar hyperglycemic state
  - Dehydration
  - Blood pressure issues

- If medications are taken without dose adjustment:
  - Hypoglycemia

- Warning signs for these conditions should be given along with instructions to break the fast and seek medical attention if symptoms occur.
The Muslim Patient
Ramadaan

Who is exempt from fasting?

- Physically sick, medically incapable, terminally ill, etc (Qur’an 2:184-185)
- Traveler on a journey
- Women during menstruation
- Pregnant and Lactating women
- Pre-pubertal children
Many Muslim patients choose to fast during Ramadaan, especially women.

Give warning signs that warrant breaking the fast:
- Decreased fetal movement
- Extreme fatigue or dizziness
- Nausea with vomiting

Advise them to hydrate during non-fasting hours.

Eat a well balanced pre-dawn and evening meal (do not skip the pre-dawn meal!)

Recommend alternating days

Give precautions against excessive daytime activity.
The Muslim Patient
Ramadaan

Medical Can and Cannot of Ramadaan:

- Eye drops, ear drops, brushing teeth - **YES**
- Inhalers and nebulizer treatments, nasal sprays – **YES**
- Necessary injections such as immunizations, insulin, and other intramuscular or subcutaneous injections - **YES**
- IV fluids – **NO** (dehydration warrants breaking the fast)
- Donating blood – **NO**
- Oral meds. during the fasting hours – **NO** (invalidates the fast)

When in doubt about these or other issues, if sick, patient has an excuse, otherwise can be advised to consult their local religious leader.
The Muslim Patient

Tidbits

- Muslims pray 5 times a day (towards direction of Makkah)
- Give them time to pray (if in pain can give chair and pray)
- Give them privacy during this time
- Do not stand in front of them when they are praying
- Avoid excessive noise
The Muslim Patient

Tidbits

- Believe in life after death
- Quran encourages a healthy living and seek medical attention
The Muslim Patient

Tidbits

- Blood donations/transfusions are acceptable
- Abortion, not allowed unless it saves the life of mother, rape or due to inevitable fetal demise
- Barrier methods are preferred contraception methods – “Coitus Interruptis” (i.e. condoms, etc.)
- Islamic custom for Islamic prayer to be called in newborns ear when first born
- Circumcision of males is mandatory
- Reporting STDs and medical records vs. culture
Organ transplantation and donation is allowed with certain conditions (do no harm)

According to the Qur’an, saving a life is as if one has saved all of mankind.

If the organ will save a life and not jeopardize the life of the donor then permissible.

If patient is dead, and organs can save a life immediately, then permissible.

Assisted suicide is not allowed.

Islam does not prohibit Muslim physicians from caring for AIDS patients or those with other sexually transmitted diseases.
Food in Islam must be Halal (permissible, slaughtered at the neck with the name of God, blood drained)

All meat, except pork is allowed as long as it is Halal
- All Seafood is allowed
- All Vegetarian options are allowed
- Kosher is allowed
- No alcohol preparation
- No porcine products
The Muslim Patient

Tidbits

- Lots of visitors during illness and death because visiting the sick is a blessing and encouraged (call for an Imam or Muslim Chaplain)

- May see the Qur’an being read or listened to during illness (considered as a type of healing)

- Maintaining a terminal patient on artificial life is discouraged

- Autopsy is discouraged unless required by law

- Cremation is forbidden

- Burial must take place as soon as possible within 24-72 hours after death (sooner the better)
Summary

- Respect - take your time
- Ask if you don’t know
- Advise the fasting patient
- Understanding basic principles will help
- Use Interpreter when needed
- Ask fellow Muslim Colleagues
Any Questions?