

Table 1. Eliciting Patient Information and Negotiating Across Cultures

EXPLORING THE MEANING OF THE ILLNESS

Explanatory Model

- What do you think has caused your problem? What do you call it?
- Why do you think it started when it did?
- How does it affect your life?
- How severe is it? What worries you the most?
- What kind of treatment do you think would work?
- What do you think the sickness does to you?

The Patient's Agenda

- How can I be most helpful to you?
- What is most important for you?

Illness Behavior

- Have you seen anyone else about this problem besides a physician?
- Have you used non-medical remedies or treatments for your problem?
- Who advises you about your health?
- What do you fear most about the treatment?

SOCIAL CONTEXT “REVIEW OF SYSTEMS”

Control over Environment

- Do you feel that you are not able to afford food, medications or medical expenses?
- Is money a big problem in your life? Are you ever short of food or clothing?
- How do you keep track of appointments? Are you more concerned about how your health affects you right now or how it might affect you in the future?

Change in Environment

- Where are you from?
- What made you decide to come to this country (city, town)? When did you come?
- How have you found life here compared to life in your country (city, town)? What was medical care like there compared with here?

Social Stressors and Support Network

- Who should be consulted or involved in your care?
- What is causing the most difficulty or stress in your life? How do you deal with this?
- Do you have friends or relatives that you can call on for help? Who are they? Do they live close to you?
- Are you very involved in a religious or social group? Do you feel that God (or a higher power)

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- provides a strong source of support in your life?
- Do you ever feel that you are treated unfairly by health care personnel for any reason?

Literacy and Language

- Do you have trouble reading your medication bottles or appointment slips or patient information?
- What language do you speak at home? Do you ever feel that you have difficulty communicating everything you want to say to the doctor or staff?

NEGOTIATION

Negotiating Explanatory Models

- Explore patient's explanatory model
- Determine how the explanatory model differs from the biomedical model and how strongly the patient adheres to it
- Describe that biomedical explanatory model in understandable terms, using as much of the patient's terminology and conceptualization as necessary
- Determine the patient's degree of understanding and acceptance of the biomedical model as it is described
- If conflict remains, re-evaluate core cultural issues and social context (for example, bring in family members or maximize interpretation)

Negotiating for Management Options

- Describe specific management options (tests, treatments, or procedures) in understandable terms
- Prioritize management options
- Determine the patient's priorities
- Present a reasonable management plan
- Determine the patient's level of acceptance of this plan (do not assume acceptance—inquiry directly)
- If conflict remains, focus negotiation on higher priorities