

## CJON Writing Mentorship Program Article

# Cultural Influences on Health Care in Palestine

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International cancer care efforts are focusing increasingly on why cancer typically is diagnosed at later stages in the developing world. In Middle Eastern countries, cancer usually is diagnosed at a more advanced stage of disease. For example, in Palestine, 42% of cases were reported stage III and 18% were stage IV. Receiving a cancer diagnosis and seeking treatment is influenced by cultural values and how the community views cancer. Healthcare providers need to understand the disparities and the influence of those disparities on health outcomes. This article is constructed using the Culture Care Theory, which depicts the importance of culture on the health behavior of the individual, and will focus on how cultural values of Palestinian patients with cancer and their families affect attitudes toward and decisions about cancer care.

The incidence of cancer is increasing in developing countries despite the advances in knowledge in these locations about prevention and treatment (World Health Organization [WHO], 2005b). The increase in cancer cases and deaths is part of a pronounced shift in the global disease burden (Huerta & Grey, 2007). Each country has a unique approach to cancer care in which culture plays a role. This holds true for the people of Palestine, who have steadfast traditions intertwined with cultural beliefs, values, and practices.

This article offers a cultural perspective on various aspects of the Palestinian population according to the Culture Care Theory (Leininger & McFarland, 2002) and the challenges healthcare staff may encounter. With an increase in globalization, cultural values have become important in today's health care in regard to how a person seeks care and abides with treatment. In general, Palestinians have limited health awareness and exposure to technologies because of economic challenges and limited resources. A basic description of Palestinian life, as it relates to culture, will give nurses insight to better manage

### At a Glance

- ◆ Culture is an increasingly important nursing issue as multi-ethnic groups expand outside their homelands.
- ◆ Nurses can deliver culturally competent nursing care through knowledge and understanding of the meanings of health and illness in Palestinian culture.
- ◆ Conflicts in value systems alter the definition of high-quality care among patients from different cultures. This can have an impact on the well-being of a patient population.

Palestinian patients seeking health care outside of Palestine and the Middle East.

## Culture and Health-Related Factors

Why do some people engage in health-promoting behaviors, such as breast cancer screening, and others do not? Culture is the

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