

A pilot investigation into the definition of cultural competence of dental health professionals in a Trinidad context

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Abstract

Accreditation bodies in the United States, Europe and the Caribbean mandate have developed standards relating to cultural competence and the impact of culture on the provision of oral health care. The population and culture of Trinidad is diverse and dissimilar to the United States and Europe. The purpose of this study is to define what cultural competence means in a Trinidad context. Semi-structured elite interviews were conducted by one author of three persons from each of the following groups: dental academics, dental clinicians, Catholics, Hindus, Muslims and Protestants. Trinidadians were generally categorized as 'easy-going' and forgiving of errors in cultural competence. Communication and the ability to put the patient at ease were considered important skills. Knowledge of the various religions was considered to be important especially as it related to their diets- especially during religious festivals and their preferences for the treatment of females. The role of the extended family was identified as being important in history taking and in the management of paediatric patients. Aside from the knowledge specific to Trinidad, the introduction of cultural competence training may be guided by the publications and guidelines of the American Association of Medical Colleges.

Keywords: *Culture, Cultural competence, Trinidad and Tobago, Religion, Dental Education, Race, Accreditation*