

EVALUATION OF THE PATIENT AWARENESS LEVEL OF HIS/HER DISEASE

"The patient's awareness of his/her own health and illness is very important," says Guillaume from France. "It's how the patient mentally assesses the disease and becomes the master of his/her own health. Emotionally, the patient accepts the disease and this is the first step in fighting it, in taking control. This requires a certain level of education already promoted in France, where the patients are the first line of defense against their own ailments. The concept of profane knowledge is common in France, implying therapeutic education (formative diagnosis, setting objectives against the disease, achieving them, assessment) at pedagogical and psychosociological levels. In this way, the patient understands the situation and gets involved in self-healing."

Exercise:

- Is there such an approach for dealing with chronic diseases in your country?
- How do you assess the patient's level of disease awareness in your country?

Mohamed shares a different outlook:

"In the Reunion Island of the Indian Ocean, where I come from, patients have different personal representations of disease depending on their education levels, cultural backgrounds, religions and ways of life. Their understanding is often simplistic (for instance, a chikungunya epidemic in 2005-2006 affected 40% of the population because it was superficially dealt with, with chikungunya being a serious disease caused by infected mosquito bites). The locals, who are Roman Catholic Christians, Protestants, Hinduists, Islamists, Buddhists, Jews treat their diseases according to their specific representations of the human body, and the doctor must take that into consideration. Belief in witchcraft and spells keep patients away from allopathic treatments, as they choose incantations, magic or purifying salts. Therefore, in order for the patient to become aware of the disease, communication and therapeutic education are very important."

Exercise:

- Have you noticed any differences in the hospital food depending on a people's culture?
- Is it important that the patient like the food? Why?
- Can you commend on the way patients eat depending on certain religious celebrations such as the Fasting in the Orthodox and Catholic religion or the Ramadan for Muslims?