

Allied Health

Not all people are familiar with the allied health professions. The approaches and roles of different therapies in the management and care of the patient's condition should be explained.

Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy is not provided in all health care systems, and so not all patients will be familiar with its approaches to healing and care. Physiotherapeutic advice and practice, such as early ambulation after surgery or childbirth, may be inconsistent with traditional attitudes to healing and recovery. The advice of a physiotherapist may not be seen to be as good as that of a specialist. For successful treatment, there needs to be close communication between the patient specialist and the physiotherapist.

For assessments that require undressing, it may be preferable to have a family member present.

Social work

The concept of social work does not exist in some countries. It is

not appropriate in many cultures for individuals to admit to social, personal or interpersonal problems, because of the disgrace this might bring to the family. Those in need may not ask for help directly. Assistance should be offered sensitively. Immediate rejection may not necessarily indicate total rejection, either, and it might be useful to revisit issues with patients once they have had a chance to think about such services.

Speech therapy

Organise an interpreter if necessary and take into account that English is not the first language. It may be possible to arrange a referral to a bilingual speech therapist. It is worth noting that some questions in the language assessment tool may not be appropriate.

When an electrolarynx is used, the monotone obscures the meaning of tonal languages such as Chinese, which creates difficulties in understanding.



Occupational therapy

People have different attitudes to dependence. In some cultures the emotional wellbeing of a patient is related to the provision of care by loved ones, and this is given greater value than independence and autonomy. For others, including most Anglo-Australians, independence is highly valued and this is emphasised in rehabilitation programs. A compromise may need to be negotiated with the person and family, as rehabilitation may be an unfamiliar concept.

For staff referring to the occupational therapy team it is best to advise early that the person will be going home so the team can make preparations for discharge, which may take longer than for people without cultural and language issues.

