

# Medication including Traditional Medicine

All cultures have their own approaches to diagnosis and treatment, and many if not all cultures have herbal remedies and medicines. Some believe that traditional medicines are more effective. After using traditional medicines without success, they go to hospital. Western medicine may be unfamiliar or may not inspire as much confidence as some traditional forms of medication, which may therefore be taken concurrently with what has been prescribed.

It is useful to ascertain all forms of medication that the patient is taking.

There may be duplication of medications because doctors have not checked what other Western medications the patient is taking before prescribing a new one.

It is crucial to communicate through an interpreter if the patient's English is not adequate, so that he or she thoroughly understands the purpose, dosage and timing of the medication/s.

There are other issues around medicines such as compliance and these need to be carefully explored. Other family members may need to understand how and when the patient's medication needs to be administered. It has been known for people to swallow suppositories. Some may take a double dose if they forget a tablet, or if they believe that this will speed up the cure. Others may have difficulty accepting certain medications. These issues need to be addressed thoroughly, and the patient and family need to be encouraged to discuss any concerns they have about medication. For example:

- ⊙ Intramuscular or subcutaneous injections may be problematic if the patient is uncomfortable with having their skin pierced (e.g. some Buddhists).
- ⊙ Some people prefer injections to oral medication because they perceive the former is more effective.

- ⊙ Followers of religions that prohibit the use of alcohol or certain animal products may object to medicines containing alcohol or gelatine. Substitute alternative brands or formulations where possible.
- ⊙ During Ramadan, fasting Muslims may not take oral medications in general or those that have to be taken with food. (In this situation, some patients will consider injections if it is important not to miss doses.)
- ⊙ "Take until finished" is a phrase that has been found to mean "take until you die" to some people, who would not take the last tablet in the packet. A better phrase is "take until all taken".

