

2025 GMHC

Cultural Humility in Healthcare



Introduction

David Narita MD

My desire is that everyone in the world can experience the fullness of the gospel free from sociocultural barriers. Our family served with OMF International in Cambodia through medicine, church planting and team support. Since being back in the US, I've been an adjunct professor, physician and missions advocate.

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Session Objectives



Recognize how culture influences everything



Appreciate our own cultural biases



Review an approach that can aid in developing cultural humility



Explore case studies to reinforce these principles in practice



Cultural **Competence**

the ability to understand, communicate
with and effectively interact with people
across cultures



Cultural **Humility**

not knowing the answers
but knowing the right questions



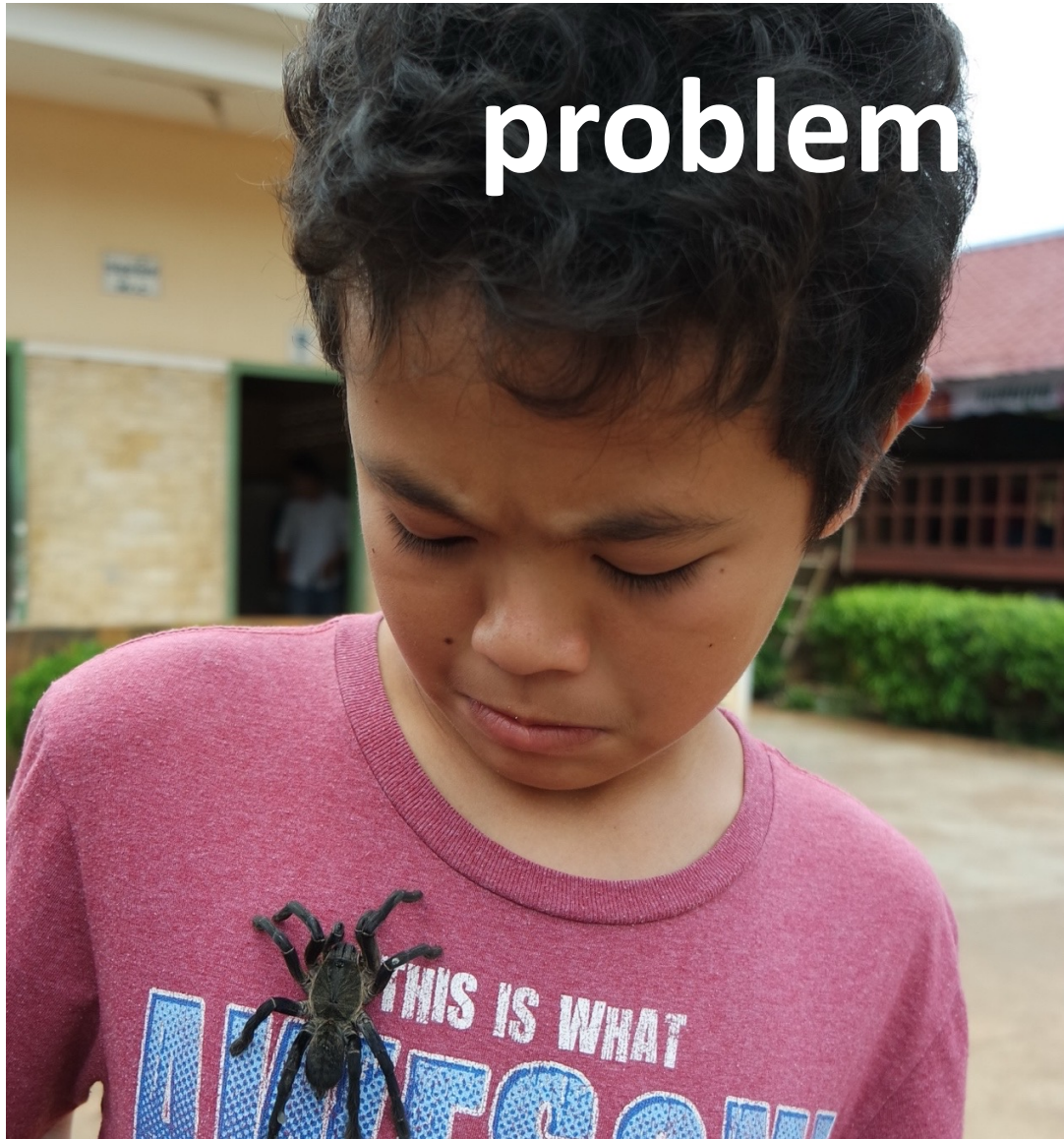
An Approach to **Cultural Humility**



Appreciate cultural influences starting with your own

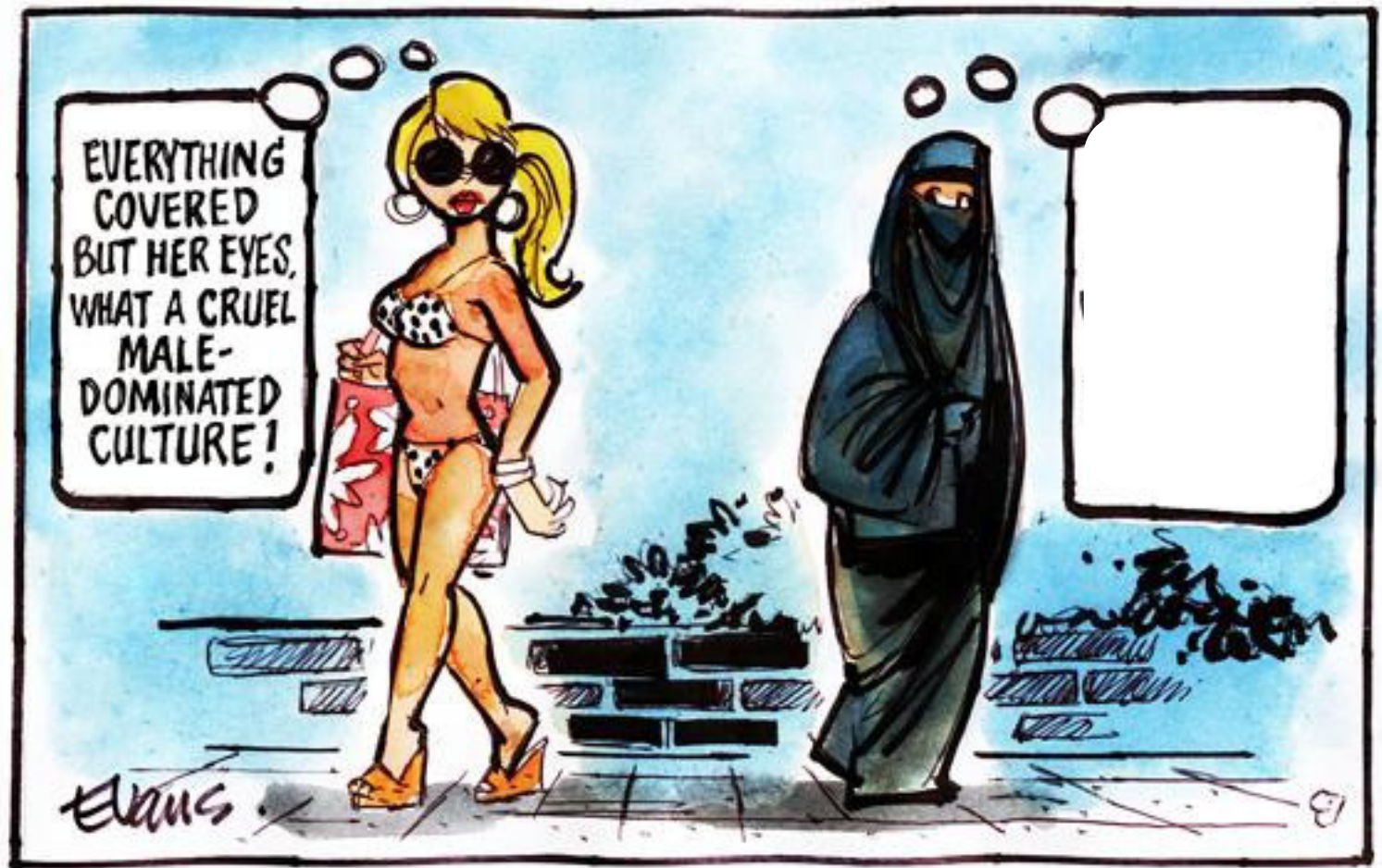
What is your cultural lens?

problem



solved





“

While living in Europe, I was struck by the differences between US and European medicine. Why did the French talk about their livers all the time? Why did the Germans blame their hearts for their fatigue? Why did the British operate so much less than the Americans? Why did my French friends become upset when I said I had a virus?

- **Lynn Payer, *Medicine and Culture***

Consider

- Drug doses have varied ten to twenty times in strength from country to country
- French people have been seven times more likely to receive their drugs in a suppository form
- Low blood pressure has been treated with eighty-five different medications and hydrotherapy in Germany
- American rates for coronary bypass have been twenty-eight times that of some European countries.

- Lynn Payer, *Medicine and Culture*

Appreciate cultural influences



Determine the **cultural values**
in play

What is governing decision-making?

outpatient
inpatient





Ned is an 11-year old boy who fell out of a tree and sustained an open fracture of his arm. After seeing several traditional healers, he arrived to our hospital in tetany. He is intubated and if he survives, has a very long and expensive hospital stay ahead.

The residents ask why were we treating this patient.

What cultural values may be at play?

Appreciate cultural influences



My value: Because we are created in God's image, all life has value.

Residents' value (?): Do the most good for the most people in limited resource settings



Ask questions
with an attitude of learning

Try to be open and avoid fishing.

Ask questions



Residents' value? Do the most good for the most people in limited resource settings

Residents' value: Doesn't Ned deserve this? His parents chose the traditional healer. Are we fighting against Ned's fate or karma?



Activate their agency
involving them in the solution

Trust and ownership

*Culturally/resource-appropriate
interventions*

Activate their agency



What is the best route forward?

If he lives, does that mean his fate was to live?

How can we know if we don't try?

What are reasonable limits we can set?

Path towards Cultural Humility



**Appreciate
cultural
influences**



**Ask
questions**



**Activate
their
agency**



Another Case Study

from our experiences in Cambodia



**Appreciate
cultural
influences**



**Ask
questions**



**Activate
their
agency**

Sopheak is a 12-year old girl with end-stage congestive heart failure due to rheumatic heart disease. She's been on pressors – her prognosis is a few days at most.

The Buddhist cardiologist shares this with her parents.



**Appreciate
cultural
influences**



**Ask
questions**



**Activate
their
agency**

My value: No one – esp a child – should die alone.
Cardiologist's value?



**Appreciate
cultural
influences**



**Ask
questions**



**Activate
their
agency**

My value: No one – esp a child – should die alone.

Cardiologist's value: We should not cause suffering.

We should give hope, allow parents to feel like they're doing something to help, remove them from a difficult situation.



**Appreciate
cultural
influences**



**Ask
questions**



**Activate
their
agency**

How could we give hope and comfort to a family while making sure the next little girl doesn't die without her parents?

We should give hope, allow parents to feel like they're doing something to help, remove them from a difficult situation. Surround them with their support system.



**Appreciate
cultural
influences**



**Ask
questions**



**Activate
their
agency**

Ultimately cultural humility is about recognizing our own biases and being able to set them aside.

It is becoming all things to all people so that by all possible means we might save some. We do all this for the sake of the gospel, that we and they may share in its blessings.

1 Corinthians 9:22-23

Explore further

Chavez, V. *Cultural humility: People, principles and practices*. San Francisco State University, 2 Aug 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaSHLbS1V4w&t=0s>

“Embrace Cultural Humility and Community Engagement.” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 8 Aug. 2022, www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/equity/guide/cultural-humility.html.

Richards, E. Randolph, and Richard James. *Misreading Scripture with Individualist Eyes: Patronage, Honor, and Shame in the Biblical World*. IVP Academic, 2020.

Miyagawa, L. A. *Practicing cultural humility when serving immigrant and refugee communities*. EthnoMed. 27 Mar 2020, <https://ethnomed.org/resource/practicing-cultural-humility-when-serving-immigrant-and-refugee-communities/>

Richards, E. Randolph, and Brandon J. O'Brien. *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible*. InterVarsity Press, 2012.

Narita, D. *Cultural Humility in Healthcare*.
<https://www.medicalmissions.com/stories/58896/cultural-humility-in-healthcare>



Completing the breakout evaluation
is appreciated – thank you!

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