

Philippines

COMMUNICATION

Languages and Dialects

- Official spoken languages: Filipino, which is based on the *Tagalog* dialect, and English
- Over 180 indigenous and non-indigenous languages are spoken in the Philippines. These languages are often referred to as dialects. Speakers of two different dialects will not necessarily understand one another.

Greetings

- Handshakes are an acceptable form of greeting for men - and for many women - but they are not acceptable for Muslim women.
- Smile as you shake hands.
- A respectful greeting could include a smile and a slight bow of the head.
- Filipino people also greet each other by making eye contact while raising and lowering their eyebrows.
- Filipino women may exchange kisses on the cheeks when they greet one another.

Names and titles

Filipino culture is comprised of indigenous traditions; in addition it contains elements of Spanish, American, Chinese, Indonesian, and Indian cultures. Chinese or Spanish last names are common in the Philippines.

- If your patient has two surnames, address them by the first surname, which is the father's surname.
- Titles are important in the Philippines. When addressing a Filipino person, use an appropriate title along with the person's full name.
- Avoid calling all Filipino people - especially those older than 60 - by first name only.

Conversation

- In order to better know how to address you, Filipino clients may ask questions about your age, your schooling, and your career.
- Generally speaking, people from the Philippines are uncomfortable with blunt or critical language.

Non-Verbal Signals

- As a sign of respect, patients from the Philippines will sometimes avoid making eye contact.
- A break in eye contact between patient and provider should not necessarily be interpreted as embarrassment, disagreement, or a lack of interest in what is being said.
- People from the Philippines may smile or laugh in order to mask embarrassment, nervousness, or other feelings of distress, including during tense or somber moments.
- Filipino people may raise their eyebrows to signal that your point has been understood.
- Filipinos may 'point' by aiming their pursed lips in a particular direction.



Making Non-Verbal Signals

- Break eye contact several times during conversation: looking at a Filipino person too intently may be interpreted as 'gawking' rather than as a sign of attentiveness.
- Except when conducting a physical exam, avoid body contact with patients. Even a pat on the back may be interpreted as rude.
- Except when medically necessary, avoid touching a Filipino person's head, which may be interpreted as degrading.
- When talking with a person from the Philippines, avoid placing your hands on your hips.

CULTURAL NORMS

Patient and Provider Interaction

Attitudes toward Health-care Providers

- If you wear clothing considered to be informal (for example, jeans) or immodest, some Filipino patients may believe that you consider them to be of lower socioeconomic status.
- If you demonstrate an unhurried manner in clinic, then you may likely be perceived as someone who truly cares for patients.
- If you must hurry away from a patient to other work, talk first to the patient about time constraints faced by the staff.
- Filipino people who are spoken to loudly may feel scolded.
- Interrupting another speaker could be considered offensive.

Behavior in Clinic

- To avoid interrupting you, a Filipino person may try to get your attention by brushing a finger against your elbow.
- In an effort to 'save face', Filipino people may employ the word 'yes' instead of a non-committal response such as 'I'll think about it'; they may also say 'yes' to avoid giving someone an outright 'no'.

Visiting the Home

- Remove your shoes before you enter a Filipino household.
- Treat elderly people with great respect, and greet them first.
- Show interest in the well-being of all family members.
- Pay compliments to the hospitality offered at the home.
- Accept the food you are offered with gratitude; refusing could be interpreted as impolite.

Medication

- As part of exercising self-control, some older patients may avoid reporting symptoms or medication side effects, including pain and nausea.
- Filipino patients may prefer to receive medication either intravenously or by mouth; many dislike injections.

TRADITIONAL IDEAS AND BELIEFS

Beliefs about TB

Some patients may believe tuberculosis could be a result of a genetic predisposition, poor nutrition, substandard housing, or general poor health. People may believe that TB could be directly linked to another illness, like a cold or bronchitis.

Filipino people may also attribute TB to one or more of the following:

- Overwork
- Alcoholism or heavy smoking
- Excessive worry (or generalized anxiety)
- Frequent pregnancies
- Changes in body temperature
- Dryness or dehydration in the body

Beliefs about TB Transmission

Because of an unproven belief that TB only affects adults, Filipino people may believe that children cannot contract tuberculosis.

Some Filipino people, including patients, may believe that TB could be transmitted in one or more of the following ways:

- Sharing eating utensils, telephones, or beds with an infected person;
- Receiving a blood transfusion;
- Drinking water shared by an infected person;
- Engaging in sexual intercourse with an infected person;
- Touching an infected person;
- Talking to an infected person.

Stigma and TB

Although stigma and stigmatizing practices continue to exist, do not assume all Filipino patients and their families will believe the misperceptions listed here.

- Among TB patients, misperceptions regarding transmission can lead to extreme isolation.
- TB patients are thought by some to be dirty and dangerous; those with TB may be shunned (or otherwise avoided) by family members.
- The spouse of a person with TB may avoid having any contact with their partner.

Common Terms for TB

Some Filipino people, including patients and those belonging to indigenous groups, may describe TB with the phrase 'weak lungs' (or *mahina ang baga*).

- Some people believe the phrase 'weak lungs' is less serious than TB; some believe referring to an illness with this phrase carries less stigma than would a TB diagnosis.
- Some Filipino people believe 'weak lungs' to be non-contagious.
- The phrase '*mahina ang baga*' can be used to describe TB without hemoptysis.

Traditional Beliefs

In the Philippines, many people believe they must live by a specific set of accepted behaviors, and that failing to do so would bring shame on themselves and their families. Filipino people refer to this kind of shame as *hiya*.

Seven common Filipino cultural beliefs can give healthcare practitioners insight into how Filipino people interact with concepts of health and illness. The following table presents each of these seven common beliefs, along with an English translation.

Filipino word or phrase for cultural belief

English

<i>Namamana</i>	Inheritance
<i>Lih</i>	Conception (or maternal cravings)
<i>Pasma</i>	Hot and cold syndrome
<i>Sumpa and Gaba</i>	Curse
<i>Namaligno</i>	Mystical and supernatural causes
<i>Kaloob ng Diyos</i>	God's will

These beliefs are used to understand and to explain a range of health issues, including inherited conditions, sudden onset illnesses, and other diagnoses.

Traditional Remedies

Filipino people may seek care from a traditional healer before seeking healthcare in the U.S..

Traditionally, Filipino people relate illness to a concept of imbalance in the body; therefore, as part of a treatment plan for TB, non-allopathic practitioners could include treatment for a general imbalance in the body.

Traditional remedies for tuberculosis could include one or more of the following items:

- Engaging in (or receiving) prayer;
- Taking herbal remedies;
- Drinking milk (or large quantities of water);
- Giving up smoking;
- Taking *vitamin sa baga* (or 'vitamin for lungs');*
- Improving sanitary conditions at home and at work.

**Vitamin sa baga* is actually Isoniazid – taken as monotherapy – and therefore is not strictly traditional.