

Cultural Competence in the Amish Community

Presented by Elizabeth Bade, MD
 Medical Director
 Scenic Bluffs Community Health
 Center, Cashton WI

Disclosure: Elizabeth Bade

Dr. Elizabeth Bade has no relevant financial interests to disclose.

Goals

Upon completion of this activity, the participant should be able to:

- Define 'Cultural Competency'
- Understand an overview of the history of the Amish community
- Feel comfortable developing a plan of care with an Amish family which respects their cultural values and medical needs including immunizations

What is 'Scenic Bluffs'?

- Federally Qualified Community Health Center (FQHC)
 - Sliding scale fee for uninsured
 - Different reimbursement model
 - Community/patient Board of Directors
- Doors opened for service in 1994 in Cashton
 - Now have 3 locations in Norwalk (medical), Cashton, and Viroqua (dental)
 - Medical, Dental, Behavioral Health, Chiropractic services, pharmacy

Cashton, WI

- Located about 30 miles east of La Crosse at Hwy 33 and Hwy 27
- Population around 1,000 people for the Village of Cashton
- Approximately 6,000 Amish in the Cashton, Westby, and surrounding area



Cultural Competence

- The ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with persons from cultures and/or belief systems other than one's own

• McGraw-Hill Concise Dictionary of Modern Medicine. © 2002 by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

Amish History

- Born out of a reformation movement in the 1600's in Europe
- Moved to the US to avoid persecution and maintain their way of life
 - 2 waves –
 - 1727-1770 and 1815-1860
 - Settled in Pennsylvania first
- First Amish in WI - 1925
- 2012 census data – over 16,000 Amish in WI
- Ohio (54,000), Penn. (50,000) and Indiana (36,000)
- Communities as far west as Montana and as far south as Belize

Amish community



- Christian faith based on teachings of Bible, particularly the Old Testament
- Amish are chosen people belonging to "true church"
- As such, staying separate from modern society is important
 - Refuse to take oaths
 - Refuse Military service
 - No electricity or cars
 - No government aid
 - Opt out of medicare and medicaid

Amish Culture

- They structure rules and conduct lives in accordance with *Gelassenheit* or calmness
 - Submission of individual desires to will of the group
 - Emphasis on humility, conformity and obedience
- Value life, but accept disability as part of life

Amish Dress

- Plain dress reflects core beliefs
 - Shows member has yielded to collective order
 - Prevents clothing from being used as tool for self-enhancement
 - Promotes equality by limiting individuality
- No zippers or buttons – only stick pins or hook and eye
- Does the color matter?

Amish family Structure

- Men and Women roles are fairly traditional and biblically based
 - Some women do not marry
 - They often work in greenhouses, bakeries or as school teachers
- Gender roles are different, but equally valued
 - Do not assume only men make health care decisions
 - Be respectful of group decision making

Amish school

- Established in 1938
 - Previously attended public schools
 - Rural schools conformed to Amish beliefs
- Changes in 1920s and 30s led to dissatisfaction with public schools
 - Demise of one-room schoolhouses
 - After WWII, Amish started to withdraw children from public schools – some parents jailed

Amish schools

- Famous case in 1972 in WI
 - WI vs. Yoder
 - State argued Amish were violating compulsory attendance laws; Amish argued religious freedom
 - Result – Amish won right to educate children in Amish schools
- Amish education today
 - Elementary – 1st through 8th
 - Further formal education is not usually sought out
 - Teachers tend to be unmarried Amish women with no formal training other than their own Amish education

Medical Care for the Amish

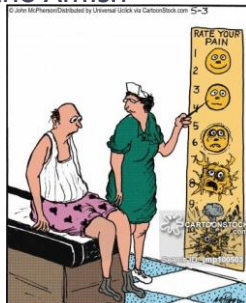
- Pragmatic approach to health care
 - “Why do we need that test?”
 - “what happens if we don’t do that test?”
- Home treatments and supplements
- Life is valued, but acceptance of death or disability due to illness as part of God’s plan
- Preventive care less valued

Medical Care for the Amish

- The church does not dictate much about health care
 - Choice is up to the individual patient or family
 - Cost is often a factor
 - Travel to out of the state or country for care that is more affordable or “trusted” is common
 - Alternative practitioners are often utilized with or instead of Western practitioners

Medical Care for the Amish

- Pain is more a part of life
- Often there is a stoic acceptance of God’s will when it comes to death, even for children
- Long term care of disabled children or elderly at home is the norm – even a privilege



Immunizations in Amish

- Vaccination rates are hard to determine
 - no insurance or school records
- Illinois study showed an 80-90% vaccination rate in the Old Order Amish population studied
- Most estimates around 60-65%



Low vaccination rates

Amish culture

- Adverse effects
- Don't work anyway
- Better to have "natural immunity"
- Made of toxic materials
- Religious beliefs
- Cost or access to care

English culture

- Adverse effects
- Don't work anyway
- Better to have "natural immunity"
- Made of toxic materials
- Religious beliefs
- Cost or access to care

Risks

- **2014 measles outbreak in an Amish community in Pennsylvania**
 - 2 volunteers brought it back to the community from Philippines
 - Pre-outbreak vaccine levels around 14%
 - Used Bishops and church leaders who cooperated with public health to vaccinate and quarantine
- **Pertussis outbreak in Illinois 2009-10**
 - Successful campaign using advertising in the Amish newspaper and community leaders led to an increase in vaccination rates by 10%
- **Polio outbreak in Minnesota in 2005**
 - 2 index patients hospitalized
 - Babies were discovered to have SCID (severe combined immune deficiency disorder)
 - First polio outbreak since 2000

Practical Tips for conversations

- Be respectful of English as a 2nd language
- Allow time for family conversation/consultation
- Use examples relevant to Amish community that are practical
- Herd immunity to motivate
- Ask if they have a trusted health care provider
- Use clear, practical information
- Avoid using "national recommendations"




Summary

- No one can be an expert in every culture
- Do not assume that Amish don't want vaccines - ASK!
- Explain your point of view in a culturally competent way
- Be respectful of the values and beliefs that are different than yours

References

- Gastanaduy, et al. A Measles Outbreak in an Underimmunized Amish Community in Ohio. *N Engl J Med.* 375:14. Oct 6, 2016. 1343-1354.
- Hurst and Mcconnel. *An Amish Paradox.* 2002.
- Huntington. *The Amish and the State.* Health Issues. Pg 185.
- Medina-Marino, Reynolds, et. Al. Communication and Mass Vaccination Strategies After Pertussis Outbreak in Rural Amish Communities – Illinois, 2009-2010. *The Journal of Rural Health.* 29:413-419. 2013.
- Poliovirus Infection In Four Unvaccinated Children in Minnesota Aug-Oct 2005. *MMWR.* 54(41):1053-5. Oct 21, 2005.
- Spicer, Peterson, Serogy, Loudon. *Plain Talk About Providing Health Care to Plain Communities.* UW Health. Updated 2014.
- Wenger, McManus, Bower, Langkamp. *Underimmunization in Ohio's Amish: Parental Fears are a Greater Obstacle than Access to Care.* *Pediatrics* Vol: 128(1), July 2011.
- Yoder and Dworkin. *Vaccination Usage Among an Old Order Amish Community in Illinois.* *The Pediatric Infectious Disease Journal.* 25(12). Dec 2006.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION

YESSSS. FINALLY OVER!

Thank you! I
Elizabeth Bade, MD
ebade@scenicbluffs.org
608-654-5100