

ABORTION AND BIRTH CONTROL

Abortion is permitted when the mother's health is in imminent danger. After conception the first 120 days is considered formation. The soul enters the body after the 120th day at which time the fetus attains personhood, after which time abortion is considered murder. Rape is also a valid reason for abortion if there is a fear of psychological damage and problems that could lead to physical symptoms. Birth control is also permissible if the prescribed method does not have any adverse impact on the health of either spouse and if it does not lead to permanent sterilization.

SUICIDE

Suicide is forbidden in Islam. Euthanasia is also forbidden and is regarded as murder by the person who is performing it and suicide for the person ending his/her life.

MUSLIM CHAPLIN SERVICES

The Daily Prayer (Salat): A room should be made available as a prayer room. The hospital chapel may be used for this purpose provided no icons are present or may be covered. The direction of Makkah is (17° NE in Oregon). This could then be easily pointed out to the patient as all Muslims face Makkah for prayer. The prayer rug and the Qur'an must not be touched by anyone ritually unclean (e.g. with blood or urine on hand). It is preferable that nothing should be placed on top of them.

Month of Fasting (Ramadan): The month of fasting lasts 29 or 30 days, depending on the moon sighting. Fasting occurs from dawn until sunset.

SPECIAL CARE OF WOMEN

Matters concerning family (abortion, birth control) require both spouses to agree and consent forms are to be signed jointly. Women are very modest and frequently wear clothes that cover all of their body. During a medical examination, the women's modesty should be respected as much as possible. Women are exempt from performing their prayers

up to 40 days after giving birth and during their menstruation period. She may request privacy for personal devotions.

PRIVACY

By request, provide a Head Scarf (*Hijab*) to women to protect her modesty. Modesty is an important issue. Out of discomfort over physical exposure, patients may tune out medical information and, or may experience high anxiety during a medical examination by a physician of the opposite sex. It is suggested to supply full body gowns, if possible, to properly cover the body. The gowns should be long enough to cover a patient's legs and wide enough to ensure that the back side remains covered. It is highly suggested that same-gender medical providers be available for Muslim women patients. This may reduce stress and increase the patient's cooperation. If necessary, leave the door or privacy curtain ajar (as long as the patient is dressed). A husband may expect to stay with his wife during a physical exam. Don't offer to shake hands or hug patients, unless the patient initiates it (this is especially true for patients of the opposite sex). Some patients may avoid prolonged eye contact out of respect and modesty.

Female patients may wear an opaque black cape, or *Abaya*, over their clothing and a headscarf, or *Hijab*. They should be given ample time to cover their hair, arms and legs after a knock on the exam room, even if they're wearing a full-body gown. Please provide signs stating, "Please knock before entering. This patient observes modest dress and requires the announcement of your presence".

¹*Sunni Muslims form the majority and differ with the Shia Muslims, a minority, in some matters of practice. They share the basic beliefs in God, the Prophet, the Qur'an, and the Final Day of Resurrection.*



In the name of Allah/God; the Beneficent, the Merciful)

ISLAMIC BELIEFS AND PRACTICES AFFECTING HEALTH CARE



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The following are general guidelines. Specifics may vary, dependent on individual culture, beliefs and practices.

The preservation of life overrides all the guidelines presented in this publication. Islam allows exceptions to its rules in emergency situations but these must truly be life threatening.

BIRTH RITES

A baby is bathed immediately after birth, before giving it to the mother. The father (or mother or the imam) then whispers the call to prayer in the child's ears (*Adhan* in right ear *Iqama* in left ear) so that the first sounds it hears are about the Muslim faith. Circumcision of the male child is recommended within the first seven days. If for some medical reason this is not possible it can be performed before puberty. A baby born prematurely but at least 130 days gestation is given the same treatment as any other infant.

DIETARY REGULATIONS

No pork or pork products (including medicines), such as lard, is allowed, nor alcoholic beverages or any food prepared with alcohol, such as some kinds of cakes or deserts. All permissible meat slaughtered in a special way by a Muslim is known as Halal or Zabiha. There is no prohibition against seafood. Eating kosher food is permissible.

DETERMINATION OF DEATH

Since the introduction of advanced medical technology, besides the traditional definition of death which occurred when the heart and lungs stopped functioning, some Muslim schools of thought (mainly ¹Sunni and Shia Muslims) have accepted

brain death as a valid definition when the brain ceases to function and brain cells begin to die. As such, artificial means may be used to preserve the body long enough to remove viable organs for donation. Organ donation may be applicable in order to save another's life.

NECESSARY TO LIFE INTERVENTIONS

It is permissible to use life support to save and lengthen life. Such equipment may not be disconnected for that will be construed as causing death. On the other hand, there is no obligation to continue these interventions just to prolong the imminent death. The purpose of aggressive medical intervention is to maintain the process of life not to avoid or postpone death. It is forbidden to cause harm to the patient with equipment and drugs when the futility of such procedures established by a medical team. Under those circumstances it is permissible to unplug life support systems. "Mercy Killing" or "Physician Assisted Aid in Dying" of terminally ill patients is prohibited.

POSTMORTEM EXAMINATIONS

Autopsies performed for medical research and training is permissible. Islamic medical ethics is based on the understanding that certain organs may fail in the human body while the rest of the body may still be functional. The current state of medical knowledge holds the view with scientific proof that, if the diseased organs are replaced by healthy organs and if accepted, the body machine can continue to function rather than die because of one diseased organ. Islam instructs all Muslims to save life. Thus, on this basis, transplantation in general, both giving and receiving organs, is allowed for the purpose of saving life. This has to be done under the following guidelines:

1. The medical need has to be defined.
2. The possible benefit to the patient has to be defined.
3. Consent from the donor as well as the recipient must be obtained.

4. There should be no sale of organs by any party.
5. No financial incentive to the donor or his relatives for giving his organs, but a voluntary gift may be permitted. On the other hand, there should be no cost to the family of the donor for removing the organ.
6. Any permanent harm to the donor must be avoided.
7. Transplantation of sex organs (testicles or ovaries) which would violate the sanctity of marriage is forbidden.
8. Cadaver donation is permitted but only if specifically mentioned in that person's will or in driving license.
9. Blood Transfusion is permissible. Giving blood to or receiving blood from people of other faiths is permissible.

The dying Muslim patient may wish to sit or lay with his/her face towards Makkah, and moving the bed if necessary to make this possible is appreciated. Family members and elders in the community, including the Imam, may ask to be present so that they can provide moral support, religious guidance in matters of a "living/Advanced Directive" will, and to recite the Muslim scripture, the Qur'an, around the bed. A relative or another Muslim may whisper the call to prayer into the dying person's ear. In the case of the female patient, the Imam and other male members of the community may come, but only if requested. As soon as death occurs the body should be covered completely and placed, if possible, with feet towards Makkah. There are special procedures for washing and shrouding the body. Muslims are required by their religious law to prepare the body for burial. Only when no community member can be contacted, may the health care providers perform these procedures. It is recommended that burial be performed as soon as possible, especially in summer months. Cremation is forbidden even if there is a will to that effect.