Listen to what patients say with sympathy and understanding. Listen to the patient’s perception of the problem without imposing values that my conflict or be inconsistent with those of other cultures or ethnic groups. Arthur Kleinman’s explanatory model for illness can serve as a guide:

1. What do you call your problem? What name does it have?
2. What do you think has caused your problem?
3. Why do you think it started when it did?
4. What does your sickness do to you? How does it work?
5. How severe is it? Do you think your problem will be here for a short time or a long time?
6. What do you fear most about your sickness?
7. What are the chief problems your sickness has caused for you?
8. What kind of treatment do you think you should receive? What are the most important results you hope to receive from treatment?

Explain your perceptions of the problem and Empathize by understanding that the perception of illness and disease and its causes varies by culture.

Acknowledge and discuss the differences and similarities and recognize that culture influences help-seeking behaviors and attitudes toward health care providers.

Recommend treatments that respect individual preferences and are based on an integrated approach to care.

Negotiate agreement and Navigate through complicated health care delivery systems with and on behalf of patients.

NOTE: LEARN only works when you are able to communicate with the patient. Federal law stipulates the critical importance of accommodating persons with limited English proficiency in health care settings. You may need to learn to work with an interpreter. Accurate communication is the foundation of proper diagnosis and treatment.
References and Resources


- Kleinman, A. (1988). *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing and the Human Condition* (This must be included as the 8 questions under “Listen” of the LEARN mnemonic are from this source).

- National Alliance for Hispanic Health has many resources at www.hispanichealth.org.


Established in 1996, the Association of Clinicians for the Underserved (ACU) is a sect 501 (c)3, nonprofit, transdisciplinary organization whose mission is to improve the health of underserved populations and to enhance the support and development of those clinicians serving those populations.

ACU currently has an established constituency of 50,000 clinicians and over 1,000 organizations making up a unique cadre of health professionals, advocacy organizations, geographic regions, practice models, and patient populations. ACU's members and its constituency are united by their common dedication towards improving access to high quality medical, behavioral, oral and pharmaceutical health care for our Nation’s underserved communities.

If you are a clinician serving underserved patients or are personally committed to improving the health of communities that lack access to comprehensive health care and preventive services, we encourage you to join.

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