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Ensuring cultural sensitivity for Muslim patients in the Australian ICU: Considerations for care

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Abstract

Australia is a diverse and multicultural nation, made up of a population with a predominant Christian faith. Islam, the second largest religion in the world, has demonstrated significant growth in Australia in the last decade. Coming from various countries of origin and cultural backgrounds, Muslim beliefs can range from what is considered "traditional" to very "liberal".

It is neither possible nor practical for every intensive care clinician to have an intimate understanding of Islam and Muslim practices, and cultural variations amongst Muslims will mean that not all beliefs/practices will be applicable to all Muslims. However, being open and flexible in the way that care is provided and respectful of the needs of Muslim patients and their families is essential to providing culturally sensitive care.

This discussion paper aims to describe the Islamic faith in terms of Islamic teachings, beliefs and common practices, considering how this impacts upon the perception of illness, the family unit and how it functions, decision-making and care preferences, particularly at the end of life in the intensive care unit.



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Keywords

Islam; Muslim; Cultural sensitivity; Death and dying; ICU; Terminally ill

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