

The Psychology of Care Communication in Cross-Cultural Contexts

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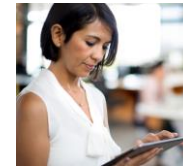
Context of Care



Context of care is the location where individuals engage in healthcare activities. Expectations associated with these context affect how patients use communication materials like texts and images. The patient's experiences shape these expectations by creating mental models for where healthcare activities are performed, by whom, how, and using what.

These mental models affect how patients perceive and use content to achieve healthcare objectives. Materials that conform to these models are generally used; those that do not are often dismissed or questioned. The mental models of an audience are thus central to how individuals approach healthcare communication.

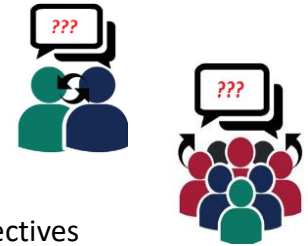
As cultures generally have different experiences in healthcare contexts, the mental models individuals have for healthcare processes can vary across cultures. Understanding these mental models and the expectations they create are central to cross-cultural health and medical communication. Processes that help identify an audience's mental models can be key to successful communication in international healthcare practices.



Mapping Context Expectations

Understanding cultural script and prototype expectations for cultures requires meeting with the intended audience to identify (i.e., map) core factors of

- Where patients perform a healthcare activity
- What is involved in this process
- Who is involved in this process
- What parties do and use (and how)



Collecting this information involves methods like

- Individual interviews to obtain individual perspectives
- Focus groups to gain group insights on expectations

And using data to create guidelines/depictions of context of care models.

Individuals would use such guidelines and depictions to draft materials to test with the audience in the associated context of care and revise items accordingly. This process would continue until testing identifies materials that match cultural context of care expectations.

Mental Models and Contexts of Care

Central mental modes affecting patient expectations and use of materials in contexts of care are

- **Scripts of Care** – Establish individuals, items, and processes (who performs what part of healthcare act and what do they do and use)

- Based on repeated experiences engaging in healthcare in a location



- **Prototypes of Care** – Establish how to identify items and individuals (how do you know who central actors are and essential items to use)

- Based on design of items and individuals involved in healthcare activity in a location



Different experiences across cultures create different script and prototype expectations for context of care dynamics of where, what, who, how to engage in healthcare and these can affect communication practices, expectations, and perceptions across cultural groups.

Next Steps

Recent global health situations have revealed the power of scripts related to context of care expectations across cultures. Communication strategies around mask wearing, social distancing, and testing under COVID-19 have revealed the power of scripts in effective healthcare communication across cultures.



As nations emerge from the pandemic, new scripts will be needed to maintain public health. The key involves identifying how existing scripts for everyday locations might cause public health challenges and using script mapping to create communication solutions. Such practices can help cultures address local and global health challenges today and in the future.