

**In providing medical care to the Hispanic patient, communication always takes place within a cultural, social context. Effective bicultural communication builds on cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. This awareness is key to understanding the mind-set of the patient and must be used from the conceptualization stage of the message through strategic planning, final implementation, and execution.**

### **APPROACHING THE HISPANIC PATIENT**

In developing the Alcohol Tool Kit to be used with Hispanic patients one must consider how marketers are approaching this complex market. Ideally when working with consumers of different cultures, it is important to think and feel from the perspective of that culture.

Traditionally, and until recently, when targeting consumers across cultures, cultural awareness has been lacking. It is safe to assume that although we are looking at the Hispanic consumer, much if not all of the information also pertains to health related issues or the Hispanic patient.

When dealing with the Hispanic patient, providers need an in-culture understanding to develop ads, images, and messages that can communicate effectively. The message should let the patient know that the provider “knows them and understands them.”

Given the complexity of the U.S. Hispanic culture what is needed is a framework, or a point of view, that will allow one to approach the Hispanic patient from within their own culture, background, and socioeconomic characteristics. This frame of reference will help the provider understand what is that makes U.S. Hispanic patients tick, and how these patients differ from their Anglo American counterparts.

Speaking the language is not enough. Cultural sensitivity is the key to ensuring that messages do not backfire or distract the patient from effectively seeing or hearing what is being communicated.

For a provider, it is important to understand that the Hispanic market is segmented. In other words, one must be aware of the makeup of the group: are they predominantly Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadorian, etc. Again, it is important to identify Hispanics of different regions, acculturation levels, countries of origin, legal status, and socioeconomic status.

### **Ecosystemic Model**

Psychologists Falicov and Karrer adapted the ecosystemic model from one by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1977) to help explain the cultural and social difficulties immigrants encounter when moving to the United States. Even though the model was designed to represent Mexican working-class people, it has also been successfully applied to explain

and uncover behavioral traits of Hispanics from other countries and socioeconomic groups.

The individual in the Anglo model tends to make decisions unilaterally, while the **Latino will try to make his or her decisions complement the needs of the family group.** Whereas Anglos tend to be task oriented, **Latinos will focus on the relationships.**

When it comes to dealing with institutions that organize everyone's lives -- government, business, banks, utilities, media etc. -- Anglos tend to rely heavily on these institutions, whereas **Latinos, tend to rely on them less.**

In reference to the larger, broader, intangible picture, where there are shared values, beliefs, attitudes norms, and aspirations common to people sharing a culture: for Anglos, individual achievement rules and **for Latinos, family interdependence takes precedence.**

This model shows how traditional working-class Latinos relate to institutions vis-à-vis middle-class Anglo Americans. Hispanics tend to rely less on institutions than do middle-class Anglo Americans. Lack of trust in institutions is a common trait among many Latinos.

### **How major mistakes in advertising communications and marketing to Hispanics can be avoided.**

- **Start from scratch: gather as much background information as possible on the sociocultural aspects of the group you are targeting. Some Hispanics have lived in the U.S. for many generations, others for a few years, and still others are recent arrivals.**
- **Become knowledgeable about your target audience's socio-psychographic background: place of origin, social class, income status, gender roles, and age are critical to the success of interethnic communications.**
- **Learn about people's relationship to your product or service: never assume you can simply translate your general market effort to an immigrant market segment.**
- **Pay attention to the specifics: forms of interaction such as body language and tone of voice. Expressions carry great emotional value in face-to-face communications. They must be "in-culture," or in the culture of the specific consumer group.**
- **Be aware of differences: make a point of finding out the do's and don'ts of the culture's society. For example, when addressing Hispanic adults you should refer to them as Mr. or Mrs., and avoid using first names unless you consider yourself a personal friend of the family.**

- **Learn about their accomplishments: become familiar with the contributions Hispanics have made to American culture, business, politics, the military, and other areas that could be used in advertising and marketing endeavors.**

## **Hispanic Consumer/Patient Cultural Traits**

### **Familismo**

The pillar of Hispanic culture is the family, which includes the extended family of grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. The emphasis Hispanics place on relatives is called familismo. The family's needs and welfare take precedence over the individual member's needs. The family, as group, is usually the first and only priority. This is reflected in the educational process within the family as well as in the family's expectations of each other.

### **Relationship with Children**

A major difference between mainstream American and traditional Hispanic cultures is in child-rearing orientations. "Children in Hispanic families are not believed to be capable of acting independently until they reach maturity, regardless of physical and emotional development of the child. This leads to parental over concern for keeping the child close and attached to the family.

### **Machismo**

Machismo is a complex set of beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors, about the role of men that is pervasive in Hispanic culture. The concept refers to the roles men fulfill according to societal rules and how they view themselves with respect to their environment and other people. It involves how men function as providers, protectors, and representatives of their families to the outer world. They have obligations, responsibilities to uphold the honor of the family members, to deal effectively with the public sphere, and to maintain the integrity of the family unit. Machismo also refers to having socially acceptable, manly characteristics, such as being courageous, strong, and virile. The manly image includes being seen as the head of the household, but listening to and being respectful of women. This traditional role provides much more freedom for men than women with regard to sexual activity, public, and social interaction.

### **Marianismo**

Marianismo is, to some extent, the female counterpart of machismo. The term refers to an excessive sense of self-sacrifice found among traditional and less acculturated Hispanic women: the more sacrifice, the better the mother, the better the spouse, many times to the detriment of the woman. This cultural trait is supported by a complex set of deep-rooted beliefs and values that determine how Hispanic women choose to live or not

to live their lives. Marianismo has both positive and negative aspects. The positive aspects are key to the Hispanic family. They include being a very dedicated, loving and supportive wife and mother; teaching the children Hispanic culture and religion; being a comadre in the community; and being empathetic and ready to help those in need. The negative is that Marianismo tends to breed low self-esteem and in some cases, depression, which limits a Latina's personal potential.

### **Cultural Characteristics at a Glance**

- Speak Spanish at home
- Mostly Catholic
- Status-oriented professionals like to be addressed with respect and by their title
- Family-oriented
- Group-oriented
- Family stratified by sex and age: father, mother, children
- Generational hierarchy: grandparents, children, grandchildren
- Observant in social interaction based on authority and familiarity of the parties involved
- Amicable but formal in business situations: last names preferred, addressing a new client by his or her first name is rarely welcomed
- More focused on the present rather than the future

(Information derived from "Marketing to American Latinos - A Guide to Time In-Culture Approach) Isabel Valdez, Paramount Market Publishing, New York, 2000)