Palliative Care - A Muslim Perspective

Ms Rehanah Sadiq
Muslim Chaplain
Muslim Beliefs

6 articles of faith

• Allah – Arabic word for God
• Angels (unseen realm)
• Scriptures/books
• Prophets
• Day of Judgment
• Divine decree (good and bad)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Urdu/Punjabi</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shahadah</td>
<td>Shahadat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salah</td>
<td>Namaz</td>
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<td>Zakah</td>
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<td>Siyam</td>
<td>Roza</td>
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<td>Hajj</td>
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**Five pillars of Islam (actions)**

- **Testimony of faith**
- **Prayer**
- **Alms-giving**
- **Fasting**
- **Pilgrimage**
Testimony of Faith (1st pillar)

Witnessing (shahadah)

A Muslim is one who believes and declares,

“There is no god except Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah”

Muhammad (pbuh)

- Prophet & last messenger
- Role model
- Descendant of Abraham through line of Ishmael
Testimony of Faith
(1st pillar)

Abraham

Isaac

Muhammad
(born 571 CE)

Ishmael

Isaac

Jesus
Prayer (2nd Pillar)

Obligatory Prayers (Salah)

For the practising Muslim, ritual prayers are offered at:

✧ Dawn
✧ Noon
✧ Late afternoon
✧ Sunset
✧ Night

Prayer timetables are easily downloaded
Location for prayer

- Quiet space/chapel/prayer room (ideally without symbols or icons)
- Room for bowing and prostrating
- Secure space in front
- For women, the backside secured from onlookers
- Depending on a person’s degree of incapacity, prayers may be performed sitting or lying down
- *Qiblah* direction marked if possible (South East in UK)
Direction of Makkah (Qiblah)

- Qiblah sign
- If possible, the incapacitated patient might require physical assistance in positioning his chair or bed in the right direction
Washing for prayer (Wudu’)

- The hands, face, arms and feet are washed
- Ambulatory patients may need help to the bathroom for washing for prayer.
- Bedridden patients may request a jug of water and a large bowl
- Dry washing (tayammum)
- Women are excused from the ritual salah prayer during their periods of menstruation or post-partum bleeding
Paying Welfare (3\textsuperscript{rd} Pillar)

Alms-giving (\textit{Zakah})

- 2.5\% of excess wealth
- Distributed to the needy, including those in debt
Fasting (Sawm)

- Abstinence of food, drink, sex between dawn and sunset
- Exemptions: elderly, children, ill, pregnant, those on a journey…
- May also be performed outside of Ramadan
Pilgrimage to Makkah (Hajj)

- Once in a life-time
- Only for those who are able physically, circumstantially, financially …
- Great physical hardships for many in rites of Hajj
- Humility and equality before God
Sources of Guidance

The Quran

- Revelations given to Muhammad
- Covers all walks of life; spiritual, social, economical, political
- Builds on previous texts sent before eg. Torah, Psalms, Gospels
- The last testament, the completion
Sources of Guidance

The Sunnah

- Way of life of Muhammad
- Prophetic sayings and behaviours (hadith)
- Culmination of the previous Prophetic traditions
Making assumptions!

• Not all Muslims practice all aspects of the Islamic faith

• Many have not had the opportunity of increasing their knowledge of Islam

• Some who are aware of Islamic teachings put them into practice, others choose not to
Misconceptions

• Some traditions clash with Islamic teachings
• Man-made traditions and superstitions that are confused with religion
Diversity

- Many traditions are in line with Islamic teachings and these may vary between groups of people
- Different schools of thought
- Very diverse, both in culture and in religious belief
Hospice

Need for greater awareness

- Misconceptions of being a place for Christians exclusively
- Dying at home
Communication

Explanation needed

- Patient entitlements
- Provision for religious needs
- Any tests, procedures and treatment needed
- Use of interpreters
- Availability of Muslim Chaplain
Religious Figures in Islam

Religious scholar, leader, guide

- Imam
- Mawlana
- Molvi
- Mufti
- Mullah
- Shaykh
- ‘Alim Hafiz
Acknowledging religious and spiritual needs

“I don’t know if you have any religious needs – but I thought I would let you know…”

e.g. a copy of the Qur’an

“If you want some quiet time to yourself – or you want to pray, I can close the curtain around you.”

allowing the patient to have that space…
Perception of Illness and Death

Generally

• Muslims receive illness and death with patience and prayers
• Illness is considered a purification and may be an atonement for wrong actions
• Reward in the Hereafter
• Death is considered a journey to meet their Creator and a passage into eternal life
• However, to seek treatment and care is strongly encouraged
When faced with illness

Serious time of deep reflection of the self and meaning of life

Qur’an, 32:9

‘Then He fashioned him and breathed into him of His spirit; and appointed for you hearing, and sight and hearts…’

… Fitra (innate nature)

connecting with the self is more important now than ever
Taking an account of one’s deeds

Qur’an, 74:38

‘Every soul is a pledge for its own deeds’

Last chance of doing good deeds; charity, prayer, forgiveness, Qur’an recitation, supplication etc.
Muslim Family

- Nuclear family
- Extended family and neighbours
- Community as a family
- Global Muslim family
- Humankind as a family
Power relations

- Vary from family to family
- Parents, spouses, elder children in descending order, generally
- Useful for staff to identify who might be the spokesperson for the family
Refusal to take medication

“It is God’s will!”

Treatment is also God’s will…

Hadith

“Your body has a right over you, and so seek treatment, servants of God, for every illness God created, He created a treatment for it.”
Treatment

Opioids and Sedatives

- Alleviation of suffering
- Maintaining a level of consciousness
Visitors

A religious duty

• Visiting and assisting the indisposed is a basic form of worship to bring one closer to God

• Many visitors, other than family and friends may come to see the patient
Hadith Qudsi

‘O son of Adam, I fell ill and you visited me not. He will say: O Lord, and how should I visit You when You are the Lord of the worlds? He will say: Did you not know that My servant So-and-so had fallen ill and you visited him not? Did you not know that had you visited him you would have found Me with him?...’
Provisions for Worship

Resources

• The Qur’an – provides solace and comfort in reciting or listening to (audio tapes, CD’s etc.)

• Availability of copies for personal recital

• Etiquette regarding the Qur’an

• Prayer beads

• Prayer mats
Diet

Halal food

- *halal* (lawful)
- *haram* (unlawful)
Forbidden (haram)

- Pork and pig products
- Flesh-eating animals
- Birds of prey
- Carrion
- Blood
- Alcohol and intoxicants
- Food ingredients, e.g. lard, animal fat, gelatine derived from non-halal sources
Lawful (*halal*)

- All other food is lawful
- “*All things are allowed except that which is specifically forbidden.*”
- If in doubt Muslims would prefer to eat fish, eggs, or dairy products instead of meat
- Any products suitable for vegetarians (and not containing alcohol) will be *halal*
- Family will often bring food if there are no restrictions
Personal Hygiene

Keeping Clean

• Cleanliness is considered half of faith!

• Body waste such as urine, stools and menses can make the Muslim body impure preventing them from practicing their religious rituals
Clothes

• The patient should not be left in clothes soiled by body waste

• Any clean clothes should conform to the code of dress especially while praying

• For patients who are incontinent pads should be provided and regularly changed especially before prayer times
Hijab

- For men and for women
- ‘Mahram’
- e.g. her father, brother, son, uncle, nephew, grandfather etc. (i.e. the people to whom marriage would be prohibited)
Social Interaction

- Behaviour and mannerism between men and women who are not ‘mahram’ to one another
- Being alone in privacy
- Physical contact, e.g. shaking hands
- Exceptions
  - Medical conditions
  - Emergencies
Modesty & Etiquette

To allay anxiety

- Separate ward/bay for female & male patients
- Examinations – only exposing the part to be examined at any one time while keeping the rest of the patient covered
- Preferably by staff of the same sex or if not possible in the presence of a chaperone
- Avoiding affectionate physical contact with members of opposite sex!
Dignity and privacy

• The Hijab can be removed in privacy or in front of mahram

• Respect for patient’s feelings by keeping hijab on even in theatre unless operation necessitates removal

• Permission should be sought from patient before allowing staff/visitors in, even if they are family members
Longevity of terminally ill

• Usually sceptical about definitive life expectancy responses

• Knowledge of time of death only with God

• However, families still prefer to be informed of imminent death
Hope for the next journey

Muhammad (pbuh) visited a young man who was dying and asked him, ”How do you feel?” The man replied, “By Allah, O Messenger of Allah, I have hope in Allah and I fear my sins.” to which the Prophet (pbuh) replied, “These two qualities do not dwell together in a person’s heart in this situation(of dying) but Allah will grant him what he hopes, and save him from what he fears.”
Hope in the next life

Qur’an, 39:53

‘Despair not of the mercy of Allah, Who forgives all sins. Lo! He is the Forgiving, the Merciful’
Dying

When death is imminent

- The *shahadah* is recited in the ear of the dying patient to help them say it
- Members of family will keep a vigil by the patient’s bed
- Chanting
- Qur’an recitation
- Positioning of bed to face *qiblah*
- Single bed/side room
Issues at Death

• Regard for the sanctity of life is an injunction

• Maintaining terminal patient on artificial life support for prolonged period in vegetative state not encouraged

• Assisted suicide and euthanasia not permitted

• Organ donation is a sensitive issue though allowed by many scholars

• Autopsy is not permitted unless required by law

• Cremation prohibited
After Death

Sensitive preparations

- Gender – male carer for male, female carer for female
- Use of gloves
- Removal of all connecting tubes
- Legs together, arms straightened
- Bandage to keep jaw closed
- Covering body e.g. hair on female
After Death

Preparation for burial

• The dead body is treated with gentleness, dignity and respect as in life
• Washing of the deceased by member of the same sex
• Wrapping in white shrouds
• Congregational prayer for the deceased
• Expeditious burial
Death & Bereavement

Bereavement

- Different generations… a changing culture
- Expressions of grief
- Women attending burials
- Counselling
Death and sleep

Qur’an 39:42

‘It is Allah that takes the souls (of men) at death; and those that die not (He takes) during their sleep: those on whom He has passed the decree of death, He keeps back (from returning to life), but the rest He sends (to their bodies) for a term appointed. Verily in this are signs for those who reflect.’

Connection with those who have passed away…
Bereavement

• Family and community support network

• Need to identify families with sub-optimal resources
And lastly…

Supplication of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham)

Qur’an, 26:80-82

‘And when I am ill, it is He Who cures me; Who will cause me to die, and then live (again); And Who, I hope will forgive me my faults on the Day of Judgment.’