



*Multi Faith Resource
Working Document*

**MULTI
FAITH
MATTERS**



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INTRODUCTION

Mutual understanding

One of the most important human needs is to have a sense of belonging. Family, culture, and religion are powerful contributors to this need. They shape our self-understanding, our sense of security, our feeling of being part of the world around us; they create a supportive environment for our development and wellbeing. On the one hand we thrive within our own family group, but on the other hand its uniqueness separates us from other family groups. The best of both worlds can be achieved through mutual respect and understanding. This is what this document is about.

Although it is only a glimpse into another person's religion and the lifestyle and values that they hold (food preparation, type of diet, personal hygiene, modesty regarding the opposite sex, prayer obligations, etc.), these are important to them and it can make an enormous difference to their sense of being understood, respected, and cared for in a strange environment at a time of crisis.

At its root, religion has to do with helping a person to live in harmony with the Source of their being and in so doing, finding connection and fulfilment in life. It often addresses the mysteries we are faced with as human beings. Such things as what is the meaning and purpose of life? What is the human being? Why do we suffer? Does it serve any purpose? What happens after death? How do I find true happiness? Where did everything come from? Why is there something and not nothing? etc. This being the case, we can understand how important it is in people's lives and the respect it deserves.

Patient-centred care

When possible, healthcare staff should try to accommodate the patient's preferences. This is especially important to both the patient and their families at critical times, such as birth or death, and so this document has specific sections covering these. There are sections on organ donation and women's health (which include attitudes toward contraception, abortion, personal modesty, etc.), as these vary greatly in different religions. Regarding these sensitive issues, be careful to respect the patient's privacy. Consider carefully what you discuss when family is present and if an interpreter is needed, do not use a family member.

Religious practices vary

Finally, and importantly, [know that there are often variations within each religious group and that people adhere to their religion's teachings in different degrees](#). Use this document as a guide, but it is always necessary to ask the patient what their own practices and preferences are.

Categories¹

The following categories are used for each religion:

- *General information*
- *Attitudes to healthcare staff and illness*
- *Religious practices*
- *Diet*
- *Fasting*
- *Washing and toilet*
- *Ideas of modesty and dress*
- *Death customs*
- *Birth customs*
- *Family planning*
- *Blood transfusions, transplants, and organ donation*

¹ Grateful thanks to the authors of NHS Education for Scotland, *Multi-Faith Resource for Healthcare Staff, March 2007 Final Version*, from which these categories and other material was taken.

BAHA'I FAITH

The Baha'i faith was founded in present-day Iran in the mid-19th century. Its international centre is in Haifa, Israel. It was founded by Baha'u'llah (1817-1892), whose name means the Glory of God. Baha'u'llah said that he was God's Messenger sent to help bring about "a new age of global civilisation that would be characterised by unity and peace". Baha'is are represented in 100,000 localities worldwide and have several million members. Some key Baha'i beliefs are that:

- *there is one God*
- *each person has a soul that lives on after death*
- *all religions have a common foundation*
- *men and women should have equal opportunity*
- *prejudice of all kinds should be challenged*
- *extremes of wealth and poverty should be abolished*
- *religious and cultural diversity should be respected*

Attitudes to healthcare staff and illness

Most Baha'is have a positive attitude towards healthcare staff and are willing to seek medical help and advice when sick. In addition to prescribed medicines, they, like most religions, believe that prayer has the power to heal.

Religious practices

Baha'is recite daily prayers of short, medium, or long duration and may also meditate. Although in illness Baha'is are exempt from these prayers, some may still wish to recite them, and would therefore appreciate privacy. They may ask for a prayer book and the Baha'i community could provide that.

Diet

Baha'is have no specific dietary requirements. However, within that freedom the use of alcohol and habit-forming drugs is strictly prohibited except when prescribed by a physician. Smoking is discouraged.

Fasting

There is a yearly Baha'i fast beginning in early March, for 19 days leading up to the Spring Solstice that marks the beginning of a new year. At this time Baha'is may not take food or drink from sunrise to sunset. Fasting is not obligatory during sickness or pregnancy, nor while breastfeeding or menstruating, during hard physical labour, or on long journeys. Persons under the age of 15 or over 70 are exempt from fasting.

Washing and toilet

There are no special requirements, but they would like to have access to water for pre-prayer ablutions.

Modesty, dress, and examination by opposite sex doctors

There are no special requirements about modesty of dress or examination by a doctor of the opposite sex.

Birth customs

The Baha'i have no rituals associated with the birth of a child but may wish to express gratitude to God through prayer. Because they believe life begins at conception, a miscarriage is a great loss, and the foetus should be treated with respect. Wherever possible the remains should be returned to the parents or local Baha'i community for burial.

Family planning

Family planning is left up to the individual and most means of contraception are acceptable. Abortion is a weighty matter of conscience taken in the light of Baha'i teachings and medical advice. IVF and artificial insemination are allowed if the sperm and egg are from the couple themselves.

Death customs

There are no special rituals before death. For Baha'is, the body of a deceased person is treated with utmost respect. The body should not be embalmed. It should be buried rather than cremated, and the burial place should be no more than an hour's journey away. Friends and relatives will say prayers for the deceased. The family generally makes funeral arrangements, but help can be sought from the local Baha'i Assembly.

Post-mortem examinations and autopsies are acceptable if necessary. As stated above, because Baha'is believe life begins at conception, a miscarriage is a deep loss. The foetus should be treated respectfully and, when possible, the remains should be returned to the parents or the local Baha'i Assembly for burial.

Blood transfusions, transplants, and organ donation

Most Baha'is would have no objection to blood transfusions and may receive transplants or donate organs for transplant. Potential complications may arise if the body needs to be moved for the organs to be harvested. The remains should be returned to the original hospital or to the family for Baha'i burial.

BRAHMA KUMARIS

The Brahma Kumaris (Sanskrit meaning '*Daughters of Brahma*' or God) is a religious movement whose leadership is comprised mainly of women and whose membership is 80% women. It was founded by Lekhraj Kripalani (Brahma Baba), a businessman and philanthropist, in 1937 in Northeast India. Their founder had a vision of how people of all cultural backgrounds could come together to rediscover and develop the spiritual dimension of their lives.

The Brahma Kumaris core curriculum is offered in the form of a foundation course in meditation, based on the teaching of Raja (Royal) Yoga. Rajyoga is viewed as a path to understanding and knowing one's identity as a spiritual being, focusing on identity of souls rather than bodies. Activities focus on developing a sense of self-worth and respect for others.

The official title of the movement is Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, and this signifies the focus of spiritual teaching within the movement and not actual universities. Brahma Baba set up a trust of 12 women to run the organisation and this system has continued, with mainly women running their centres. There are about 8,000 Brahma Kumaris centres in around 130 countries, including 50 in the UK. They number around 1 million members worldwide. The international headquarters is in Mount Abu, Rajasthan, India, and the International Co-ordinating Office is based in London.

Attitudes to healthcare staff and illness

Most Brahma Kumaris have a positive attitude towards healthcare staff and would be willing to seek medical help and advice when sick.

Religious practices

The Brahma Kumaris practise meditation regularly, health permitting, especially in the early hours of the morning, and it may be helpful for them to have access to a quiet area for this.

Diet

Brahma Kumaris are encouraged to eat a lacto-vegetarian diet (dairy products permitted) and discouraged from using alcohol, tobacco, and other recreational drugs. Most Brahma Kumaris do not use onions or garlic in cooking and prefer to have their food cooked and blessed by fellow Brahma Kumaris.

Fasting

There is no religious obligation for Brahma Kumaris to fast.

Washing and toilet

It is customary to take a shower each morning (showers are preferred to baths wherever possible). Brahma Kumaris also observe the discipline of bathing or showering after a bowel movement and would prefer to do this in hospital too, where possible.

Ideas of modesty and dress

As committed Brahma Kumaris teachers live a celibate life; they may prefer medical examinations to be undertaken by someone of the same sex. Other Brahma Kumaris are less likely to have a preference. Dedicated Brahma Kumaris women often dress fully in white.

Birth customs

Dedicated Brahma Kumaris are encouraged to live a celibate life so it would be unusual for someone from the Brahma Kumaris tradition to be pregnant or giving birth. Therefore, be aware that the mother may be struggling with this issue.

Death customs

There are no special rituals before death. Brahma Kumaris favour cremation over burial. Dedicated Brahma Kumaris would prefer the body to be in special white clothing although there is some flexibility in this. Details of the funeral arrangements are always discussed with the family of the deceased so that the family's wishes are honoured.

Blood transfusions, transplants, and organ donation

Brahma Kumaris would have no objection to blood transfusion or organ transplants. Decisions about the donation of organs are left to the individual.

BUDDHIST

Buddhism is the world's 4th major religion and within that there is perhaps more diversity of belief and practice than within any other faith. It is a way of life developed from the teachings of the Buddha (the Enlightened one) around 2,500 years ago in India. Buddhism is divided into three major traditions, found primarily in different geographical areas: *Theravada*, *Mahayana*, and *Tibetan (or Vajrayana)*.

The Buddha was the founder of a spiritual tradition which teaches individuals a way to spiritual salvation without relying on a supernatural power outside of themselves. The Buddha claimed neither to be a god nor the earthly ambassador to one. His quest was to find the meaning in life and a solution to the problem of human suffering. His way to 'Enlightenment' (*Nirvana*) was through universal compassion, wisdom (gained by meditation), and a moderate, balanced lifestyle. Buddhists believe that human existence is part of an ongoing cycle of multiple lives (*Samsara*), the circumstances of which are governed by one's deeds or actions (*Karma*).

The Buddha proposed four 'noble truths' about the human condition:

1. *that life's impermanence is full of suffering*
2. *the cause of suffering is desire*
3. *detachment from desires or cravings can free you from suffering*
4. *there is a way to do this*

These practices are a way of life based on teachings or universal laws (*Dharma*) and can be described in what is known as 'the eight-fold path' of:

1. *right view or perception*
2. *right thought*
3. *right speech*
4. *right actions*
5. *right livelihood*
6. *right meditation*
7. *right effort*
8. *right mindfulness*

There are also five basic precepts:

1. *to refrain from killing*
2. *to refrain from taking that which is not given*
3. *to refrain from misuse of the senses and sexual misconduct*
4. *to refrain from lying or using false or harmful speech, and*
5. *to refrain from taking intoxicating drink or drugs which cloud the mind*

Shortly before his death the Buddha brought together a group of his followers and founded a religious order (*The Sangha*). Buddhist communities, schools, or traditions are still known as Sangha's today and Sangha gatherings are encouraged to support Buddhists in their practice.

Attitudes to healthcare staff and illness

Most Buddhists have a positive attitude towards healthcare staff and are willing to seek medical help and advice when sick. Illness and death are not unnatural enemies, but simply conditions to be taken care of.

Buddhists generally are willing to take medicines that help, however because of the fifth precept, some will be wary and will want to know the effects of any drug that alters their emotional state or clarity of mind. Some Buddhists may favour alternative health remedies or may be reluctant to accept sedating medication. Nevertheless, as the idea of the fifth precept is to prevent people carrying out harmful acts while intoxicated, most Buddhists usually accept prescribed medication which may be intoxicating if it heals or reduces suffering.

Religious practices

Buddhist practices are wide-ranging and vary between traditions. Most Buddhists practise meditation or chanting of prayers and sacred texts. It may be helpful to offer access to a quiet area for this.

Diet

Many Buddhists are vegetarian or vegan due to the first precept and respect for other sentient beings. Some may follow a precept that involves eating only one main meal a day and this is usually eaten before midday. However, some Buddhists are non-vegetarian as the Buddha asked his monks to eat whatever they received. As practises vary, it is important to consult the patient.

Fasting

If their health allows, some Buddhists may fast on new moon and full moon days and on specific festival days such as Buddha's birthday, his death day, his enlightenment, his first sermon and others.

Washing and toilet

Washing and toilet present no unusual problems for Buddhists.

Ideas of modesty and dress

There are no points to be noted in this area and most Buddhists would not object to being examined by doctors of the opposite sex.

Before death

The manner of consideration for the dying will depend on the Buddhist group. If you need specific guidance about a patient's particular school of Buddhism or want to arrange counselling from a fellow Buddhist practitioner, then you should find out from the patient or family which specific form or school of Buddhism the patient practises and ask them for local contact details. The hospital chaplain can help with this if necessary.

The most important consideration relates to the patient's state of mind at the time of death for this will influence how they experience the intermediate or '*bardo*' states. Nearing the time of death, the state of mind should ideally be one of peace, as the patient may wish to meditate and ask for a quiet place. They might wish to avoid medications that cloud the mind at this stage, wishing for a Buddha figure to be close by, and may use a candle or incense stick if allowed. Some patients would like counselling from a fellow Buddhist or priest with recitation of prayers or sacred texts.

After death

In many schools of Buddhism there is no ritual requirement after death and normal hospital procedures are accepted. However, some Buddhists hold strong views about how the body should be treated after death. It would be helpful to ask about such views before death occurs, to avoid unnecessary distress to relatives and friends.

After death, Buddhist traditions may be for the family to request prayers from the Sangha (the local practicing community) of the appropriate school of Buddhism, and to perform certain actions and dedicate them to the dead person. An experienced Buddhist practitioner may perform special rituals.

Beliefs on post-mortem vary; some patients and relatives may object due to the belief that the mind may stay in the body for some time after the heart has stopped (and therefore interfering with internal organs may undermine the optimal dissolution of consciousness). Buddhists can dispose of a dead body by any of the four elements (earth, air, fire, and water). As traditions vary, it is important to know the patient's wishes and/or consult with their family.

Birth customs

As practices are wide-ranging within Buddhism, it is important to consult with the patient.

Family planning

There is no established doctrine about family planning for Buddhists, although they are generally reluctant to tamper with the natural development of life. In theory, a Buddhist may accept all methods of family planning, but in practice, it is the responsibility of the individual to decide.

Blood transfusions, transplants, and organ donation

There are no religious objections to blood transfusions or blood products, but attitudes amongst Buddhists to organ transplants differ. All consider donating an organ during life an act of compassion.

After death, many Buddhists will have no religious objections since helping others is fundamental to Buddhist belief. However, some may decline to donate organs after death because they believe this affects the consciousness of the deceased.

CHINESE ANCIENT TRADITIONS

Although there is a great variety of Chinese belief systems (including Christianity and Islam), the most prevalent influences are Buddhism (see above), Confucianism, Taoism (Daoism), and veneration of ancestors.

Confucianism was founded by K'ung Fu Tzu (born in 551 BCE) and deals mainly with individual morality, ethics, and the proper exercise of political power. It emphasises respect for rules and authority.

The founder of Taoism is believed to be Lao-Tse (604-531 BCE). Taoism differs from Confucianism by not emphasising rigid rituals and social order, but is similar in the sense that it is a teaching about the various disciplines for achieving 'perfection' by becoming one with the unplanned rhythms of the universe called The Way (or *tao*). Taoist ethics vary depending on the particular school, but in general tend to emphasise *wu wei* (action without intention), 'naturalness', simplicity, spontaneity, and the Three Treasures: compassion, moderation, and humility.

In traditional Chinese families, sons and daughters must be dutiful towards older family members, particularly their parents. Reverence for ancestors is regarded as a matter of great importance. Children are expected to carry out rituals and obligations in respect to the living and the dead; however, religious scepticism among the younger generation of Chinese is common. Confucianism, Taoism (Daoism) and Buddhism are often blended to form a set of complementary, peacefully co-existent religions.

Attitudes to healthcare staff and illness

While many Chinese now accept western medicine, traditional herbal remedies given by Chinese physicians are still used by many traditions and cultures. You should check whether the patient is taking Chinese herbal medicine in combination with western medicine.

Culturally, many Chinese are shy to ask the doctor questions about their condition. Always use an interpreter, not a family member, during consultations.

Religious practices

Chinese religious practices vary according to background and tradition (see the religious practice sections in Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam for guidance on Chinese patients from those backgrounds).

Diet

Culturally, Chinese have definite customs concerning food, its preparation, its service, and the way it is eaten. Rice is the staple food for the older generation, believing this will give them energy and vitality. Northern Chinese eat little rice and more wheat, maize, and other cereals. Patients often ask relatives to bring in rice and other food when they visit. A traditional Chinese belief is that consuming well-boiled soup (for six to seven hours) will help clear one's system and promote a speedy recovery.

Fasting

There is no specific guidance on fasting for the Chinese ancient traditions, however, see Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam for Chinese patients from those backgrounds.

Washing and toilet

Chinese cultures place great emphasis on physical cleanliness. Most Chinese wash by pouring water over themselves or sponging. Some worry that baths could make them ill.

Ideas of modesty and dress

Chinese women are culturally modest and would probably be more relaxed if attended by female professionals. In practice, however, the great majority of Chinese people today are used to being treated by doctors of the opposite gender.

Death customs

Funeral and mourning customs vary widely in the Chinese ancient traditions, making it very difficult to generalise for all Chinese. It is important to consult the patient and/or their family in advance.

In the case of a child, some traditions prefer things to be kept quiet and simple with little or no fuss. In some instances, a coffin may not be used – simply a sheet. There may be no formal funeral service for a child, and many do not like to mention a child who has died at all, so counselling may be difficult. Families might not like to be given back any of the child's belongings as it is considered bad luck. On the death of a child, the burial takes place at once with no special ceremony.

In the case of adults, the body is simply bathed and covered in a white sheet. Some Chinese traditions still follow the custom of clothing the body in white or traditional Chinese dress. Muslim Chinese may object to post-mortems.

Birth customs

Pregnant women will often take ginger tea. A Chinese woman may ask not to wash her hair for one month after the delivery of a baby; this is an important tradition, and she may be unwilling to go for a shower or sit in a bath. She will take great care of her body and will not take any form of exercise during this month. When a child is born, relatives may visit with presents such as chicken soup, clothing for the baby, and eggs that have been dyed red.

Family planning

Generally, there are no problems with family planning although there is often a certain reserve in Chinese cultures to talking about it, and it should not be mentioned in the presence of others. Family-planning devices, sterilisation and abortion are acceptable.

Blood transfusions, transplants, and organ donation

Most Chinese traditions will agree to blood transfusion. Organ transplant can cause difficulty as traditionally the body should be buried whole, so they may be reluctant to donate organs or tissue.

CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is the world's largest religion with approximately 2.3 billion members. People of many different cultures and backgrounds from all over the world follow it. It was founded around 2000 years ago by Jesus of Nazareth in modern-day Israel and Palestine, emerging as a new religion from Judaism. Jesus is called the Christ, the anointed one whom Christians recognise as the Son of God. While Christians believe in one God, they believe God's nature to be a triune of persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (the Trinity). The Father is seen as the Source and Creator, the Son (Jesus Christ) as their personal Saviour and the Wisdom of God, and the Holy Spirit as their inner guide who enlightens and strengthens them to lead godly lives and comforts them in adversity. Christians believe that their eternal future is secure through the acceptance of the teachings of Jesus.

One of the distinctive teachings of Christianity is to love even one's enemies. Christians show goodness and kindness to all and serve others with compassion. Jesus identified deeply with all of humankind. When questioned by his followers as to how they will be judged when they die, he tells them as they helped to feed and clothe and comfort the most forgotten of humanity, they did it to him and so would be welcomed into his father's eternal heavenly kingdom.

The Christian scriptures are called the Bible and are made up of two parts: the Old Testament (taken from the Jewish scriptures) and the New Testament where they learn of Christ's life and teachings. The key Christian practices or sacraments are Baptism and Holy Communion (also called the Eucharist). Prayer, as in most faiths, is an important practice to Christians in their daily life, especially the Lord's Prayer (the Our Father).

Although Christians hold much in common, there is a wide diversity of beliefs, ethical standpoints, and forms of worship among the many denominations and groups that make up the Christian Church. Usually, it's a matter of emphasis on teachings rather than disagreement. Christians are often involved with justice, peace, and development issues, in common with adherents of other faiths and all people of good will.

Attitudes to healthcare staff and illness

Most Christians have a positive attitude towards healthcare staff and are willing to seek medical help and advice when sick.

Religious practices

Prayer is very important to Christians, and they would appreciate some privacy for this. Many Christians have faith that God can heal them and may pray for this whilst unwell.

Other Christian practices (depending on denomination) in hospital are Holy Communion, also called the Eucharist or Last Supper, and the anointing of the sick (particularly Catholics and Anglicans). Sacramental practices may differ slightly for Catholic patients who may particularly want to see a priest for confession and absolution, and for the Last Rites at end of life. The relevant hospital chaplains would be able to offer these sacraments to Christians on a hospital ward or can facilitate this.

Diet

There are no universal Christian dietary regulations.

Fasting

There are no universal Christian fasting regulations. Fasting is not obligated but encouraged. Some Christians fast on days, e.g., Wednesdays and Fridays (especially the Orthodox Church) and at particular times of the year. Some Christians give up certain foods during Lent (a 40-day period between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday). Christians may fast before receiving Holy Communion though this is not binding for the sick.

Washing and toilet

Washing and toilet present no unusual problems for Christians.

Ideas of modesty and dress

There are no points to be noted in this area and most Christians would not object to being examined by doctors of the opposite sex.

Death customs

Dying patients of all Christian denominations will often wish the services of the appropriate chaplain or minister or priest, this is especially true for Catholic patients who will be given the Last Rites.

Family planning

For many Christians, family planning is an individual choice. All Christian churches uphold the sanctity of life, and every effort is made to preserve life. Certain churches discourage their members from using artificial means of contraception, for example, the Catholics. Abortion is also strongly condemned in several Christian denominations while other denominations leave it up to the individual. Be sensitive when discussing these issues.

Birth Customs

There are no birth rituals. If a baby is seriously ill, stillborn or dies shortly after birth, it is customary for parents to be offered the services of the chaplain who, at the parent's request, may baptise (if the infant is still alive) or offer a blessing and naming ceremony. In an emergency, any baptised Christian can perform a baptism if requested. Some Christians do not practise infant baptism and may prefer that sick or dying babies receive a blessing instead.

Blood transfusions, transplants, and organ donation

Most Christians do not object to blood transfusions and may receive transplants or donate organs for transplant. Jehovah's Witnesses are an exception to this (see the relevant section for further details).

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS (ALSO KNOWN AS THE MORMONS)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) was founded in America in the early 19th century by Joseph Smith (1805-1844) and presently has about 17 million members worldwide. The Bible and Book of Mormon are essential scriptures for Latter-day Saints. The Church views the Holy Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) as three separate and distinct members of a united Godhead. They believe in pre-existence: a spirit life before birth that a person has no memory of. They view life on earth as a period in which to become worthy to return to live in the presence of Jesus Christ and God.

Family unity is of central importance, epitomised by a 'sealing' ceremony at a Temple, when man and wife are sealed together for eternity. Children may be sealed to their parents. Family members, already dead, who were not members of the Church, may be baptised into the faith and sealed to their families. The Church encourages reverence and care for the body, and so counsels against immoral practices and the use of illegal drugs.

Attitudes to healthcare staff and illness

Most Latter-day Saints (LDS) have a positive attitude towards healthcare staff and are willing to seek medical help and advice when sick.

Religious practices

The sacrament of bread and water (Latter-day Saints abstain from alcohol) equates to the Eucharist of other Christians and is performed each Sunday. Although it may be taken in hospital, it is not regarded as essential for a sick patient. The LDS Church administers spiritual healing to the sick. At the request of a patient, two members of the LDS priesthood may visit them. One would anoint them with consecrated oil and the second would place their hands on the patient's head and offer prayer. Some privacy for this would be greatly appreciated.

Diet

Church members live by a health code known as the Word of Wisdom. It warns against the use of stimulants and substances that are harmful to the body and promotes healthy eating. LDS patients will refuse tea, coffee, alcohol, and tobacco. Hot chocolate, Ovaltine, and other such drinks normally available on hospital wards are acceptable.

Fasting

All Latter-day Saints who are medically fit to do so fast for 24-hours on (usually) the first Sunday of each month. Normally the fast would last from after the evening meal on Saturday until a meal on Sunday late afternoon. They are encouraged to donate the money saved from missing two meals to help the poor. Some Latter-day Saints in hospital may feel well enough to continue with the monthly fast.

Washing and toilet

Washing and toilet present no unusual problems for Latter-day Saints.

Ideas of modesty and dress

Some Latter-day Saints will wear special Temple undergarments (white knee length shorts and a white vest). They believe these intensely private items to be sacred and will normally wear them day and night. They may be removed by staff in an emergency following an accident but must always be treated with respect. Members don't usually wear them while in hospital.

Death customs

There are no special rituals associated with dying or death for any age group. After death, a deceased member should be washed and dressed in a shroud according to hospital protocol.

A Latter-day Saint who has participated in the Endowment Ceremony Of Their Faith should be buried wearing their special undergarments and other special clothes, and members of the Church will dress the body before burial, by arrangement with the funeral director. Generally, cremation is not encouraged, although the family of the deceased could decide on either burial or cremation.

Family planning

Although Latter-day Saints are not encouraged to use contraception, the Church does not explicitly teach that contraception is wrong and makes no doctrinal statement about it. The Church teaches that sterilization should only be considered where medical conditions jeopardise life or health. Decisions about birth control and the consequences of those decisions rest solely with each married couple.

Latter-day Saints condemn abortion on demand but believe that some circumstances may justify this. These would be when pregnancy is the result of incest or rape, when the life or health of the mother is judged by a competent medical authority to be in serious jeopardy, or when the foetus is identified by a competent medical authority to have severe defects that will not allow the baby to survive beyond birth.

Blood transfusions, transplants, and organ donation

Most Latter-day Saints do not object to blood transfusions and may receive transplants or donate organs for transplantation.

HINDUISM

Hinduism originated near the river Indus over 5,000 years ago although elements of the faith are much older. It is considered the world's oldest religion. The Hindu tradition has no founder and is a single, unified approach to understanding who we are, and what that means for our relationships with each other, the Universe, and 'God' (for those who believe in 'God'). This approach may lead everyone to a different conceptualisation of that 'Truth', but '*ekam sat viprah bahudah vadanti*': 'Truth is one, but wise men call it by different names'. Hinduism represents a complete way of life (Dharma), practised by over 1.1 billion followers worldwide. 80% of the population of India is Hindu.

Hinduism is a fusion of beliefs over time and place, using a curious, open, scientific method. New information is filtered through prior knowledge and then adapted to integrate a new understanding. Most Hindus believe in God (Brahman or Absolute Reality) and worship that one God under many manifestations, deities, or images. Examples of Hindu deities are Krishna, Shiva, Rama, Durga, Lakshmi (the god of fertility) or Dhanvantari (the god of health and medicine) and may be represented in idol form. Other Hindus may be atheist, agnostic or iconoclastic.²

Hindus believe in a system of cause and effect (Karma). Karma means 'action' (in thought, word, or deed) and so Hindus are exhorted to act in ways that fulfil Dharma, mindful that actions have consequences. Properly understood, to the Hindu this is not a fatalistic or judgmental concept, but the opposite – it is an appreciation that through our own actions, we directly influence our future; this inspires us to do our best regardless of present conditions. Hindus believe that existence is a continuous cyclical change, of which birth and death is one part. Hinduism is known for its rich spiritual tradition, humility and embracing of other religions. It has loved to learn from others and has actively sought to do so. It continues to protect, support and nurture other faiths.

Hinduism teaches that prayer addressed to any form or manifestation will ultimately reach the one God, and so Hinduism does not prescribe dogmas (rather, asking individuals to worship God according to their own belief). Understanding the individual's own practice of ritualistic prayer – who is prayed to and how - becomes vitally important. As Hinduism allows a great deal of freedom in matters of faith and worship, Hindu patients will have their own unique needs.

Attitudes to healthcare staff and illness

Most Hindu patients have a positive attitude towards healthcare staff and are willing to seek medical help and advice when sick. Many Hindu patients may be using treatments from Hindu medical traditions (such as those based on Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, or Yoga). As this may involve the use of herbal remedies, or prescribed practises that may affect Western medical treatments, or require specific materials, spaces, or other assistance, it is important to find out.

² *Atheist*: a person who disbelieves or lacks belief in the existence of God or gods; *Agnostic*: a person who believes that nothing is known or can be known of the existence or nature of God; *Iconoclastic*: criticizing or attacking cherished beliefs or institutions.

Religious practices

Hindus may wish to pray and meditate routinely. They may wish to burn incense, use holy books and prayer beads. Some may appreciate privacy for prayer times, whilst others may prefer not to be alone at these times, as communal, shared prayer is highly valued by many Hindus.

Diet

Most Hindus are vegetarian and there is a very small, but slowly growing vegan movement within Hinduism. The cow is viewed as a sacred animal so even meat-eating Hindus may not eat beef. Some Hindus will eat eggs, some will not, and some will also refuse onion or garlic; it is best to ask each individual. Generally, dairy products are acceptable so long as they are free of animal rennet, so ask the individual. It is important to remember that strict vegetarians/vegans will be unhappy about eating vegetarian items if they are served from the same plate or with the same utensils as meat. Hand washing before and after meals is customary, as many Hindus prefer to eat using the fingers.

Fasting

Fasting is a regular feature of the Hindu religion, but few Hindus insist on fasting in hospital. Fasting is commonly practised on new or full moon days or on certain days of the week (Monday or Tuesday are probably the most common), during festivals (such as Shivaratri, Saraswati, and Durga Puja) or Karwa Chauth (when women may fast for their husbands, or future husbands) and Hoi Ashtami (when women may fast for their children or future children). Some fasts (especially that for Shivaratri) may also include a vow of silence, and the day may be spent in deep prayer and meditation. Some fasts may only require abstinence from certain foods. At the end of each period of fasting, visitors may bring in 'prasad' (a food offered to a deity to be blessed and then eaten) so that the patient can join in the celebration.

Washing and toilet

Hindus will require water for washing in the same room as the toilet itself. If there is no tap there, or if they must use a bedpan, they will be grateful to have a container of water provided. Hindu patients prefer to wash in free-flowing water and will wish to shower or use a bucket with a jug or bottle. They will not want to sit in a bath. Hand washing before and after meals is customary.

Ideas of modesty and dress

Many Hindu women will much prefer a female doctor when being examined or treated. Hindu women should be accommodated in mixed wards only in emergencies. A Hindu woman may find it difficult to accept an X-ray gown because it is short.

Hindu women may wear bangles or a thread on their wrists or ankles; some men may wear a sacred thread around their torso. You should not remove these without permission. Some Hindu women wear a red spot (bindi) on their foreheads or scalp. Some men (and women) may also wear a tilak, which may be red or another colour (yellow, orange, or white are most common - some may wear a combination). These again should not be removed or washed off without permission.

Before death

If a Hindu patient is dying in hospital, relatives may wish to bring money and clothes for them to touch before they are given to the needy. They will wish to keep a bedside vigil (if the visitors are not allowed to go to the bedside themselves, they will be grateful if a nurse can do this for them while they wait). Some relatives will welcome an opportunity to sit with the dying patient and read from a holy book, recite prayers, or chant hymns. For many families, giving the patient water from the holy river, the Ganges is very important.

After death

After death the body should always be kept covered. Sacred objects should not be removed. Relatives will wish to wash the body and put on new clothes before taking it from the hospital. Traditionally the eldest son of the deceased should take a leading part in this, however young he may be. If a post-mortem is unavoidable, and, unless they are being donated, Hindus will wish all organs to be returned to the body before cremation (or burial for children under five years old in some Hindu traditions). Most family members would like to receive the ashes after the cremation of the body and would like to immerse the ashes in the holy river Ganges in India or in flowing water or on the ancestral land of the family.

Birth customs

Most Hindu woman will prefer a female doctor when being examined or treated.

Many Hindus will wish to conduct rites of passage ('Sanskaras') at this time. There are sixteen of these through one's lifetime: 3 are before birth, 1 is birth itself, and 1 is around 10-12 days after birth. Any or all of these may be encountered by hospital staff. Relatives may want to ensure that the mother has complete rest for 40 days after birth; this is based on the belief that a woman is at her weakest at this time and is very susceptible to chills, backache etc. If there is a need to separate mother and baby for any reason this should be done tactfully as she may prefer to always keep the baby with her. Some Hindus consider it crucial to record the time of birth (to the minute) so that a Hindu priest can cast the child's horoscope accurately.

Family planning

There is no objection to family planning from the religious point of view. However, there may be strong social pressures on women to go on having babies, particularly if no son has yet been born, and you should consider involving her husband in any discussion of family planning (not detracting from protection of confidentiality or consent).

Blood transfusions, transplants, and organ donation

Most Hindus have no objection to blood transfusions and may receive transplants or donate organs for transplant. Organ donation is very much encouraged by Hinduism, and increasingly within British Hindu communities.

HUMANISM

Humanism is a philosophy of life, not a religion. Humanists do not believe in a deity or afterlife and seek to make sense out of the world by logic, reason, and evidence. Humanists respect people of all faiths and aim to achieve the shared goals of a caring, free society. They condemn religious adherence that harms or disadvantages others. Human rights law is important to all humanist groups. They endorse the principles of humanitarian ideals enshrined in all such declarations, covenants, and conventions, as well as the universal initiatives promoted by the United Nations for the peaceful co-habitation of all the world's populations. There are 4-5 million humanists worldwide.

Attitudes to healthcare staff and illness

Humanists are generally respectful to healthcare staff and are comfortable seeking medical help and advice when sick.

Religious practice

Whilst Humanism is a belief system rather than a faith, Humanists recognise that many people want to mark important transitions in their lives in a way that is meaningful. Trained, registered, and accredited Humanist celebrants conduct non-religious ceremonies to observe rites of passage – for birth, marriage, and death.

Diet

There are no requirements.

Fasting

This is not relevant.

Washing and toilet

There are no requirements.

Ideas of modesty and dress

There are no requirements.

Family planning

Humanists have always been strong advocates of birth control and for the right to choose in relation to abortion.

Death customs

Many Humanists will have a living will or advance directive. Humanists will want a Humanist funeral. Many Humanists endorse death with dignity and would therefore favour legal voluntary euthanasia (with appropriate safeguards) for adults.

Blood transfusions & transplants and organ donation

Most humanists have no objection to blood transfusions and may receive transplants or donate organs for transplantation.

ISLAM

Islam, which means 'Submission to Allah (God)' is a world religion. Its adherents are called 'Muslims' which means those who submit to Allah. It originated in the Middle East in the beginning of the 7th century CE and was established and spread by the prophet Muhammad following a message from God. It is the 2nd largest religion in the world after Christianity and has 1.8 billion members. Muslims believe there is only one God (Allah), and Muhammad is his prophet. Although Muslims revere Muhammad they do not worship him. Muslims believe that everything and everyone depends on Allah. All Muslims of whatever race are members of one community known as the Ummah.

Muslims are guided to follow Allah's will by obeying their holy book, the Qur'an, and by following the example set by Muhammad. Every Muslim must perform duties known as the 'five pillars of Islam'. These are:

1. to recite a specific verse – their declaration of faith (*Shahadah*: 'There is no god but Allah and his messenger is Muhammad')
2. to offer five specific prayers daily (*Salat*)
3. to give two-and-a-half per cent of their savings once a year to the poor (*Zakat*)
4. to fast during the month of Ramadan (*Sawm*)
5. to undertake a pilgrimage to Mecca, if they can afford to, once in a lifetime (*Hajj*)

Attitudes to healthcare staff and illness

Most Muslim patients have a positive attitude towards healthcare staff and are willing to seek medical help and advice when sick.

Religious practices

One of the most important religious practices for Muslims is daily prayer, praying five times a day. Prayer is preceded by a washing ritual (*wudhu*) if there are facilities for this. Their prayer is accompanied by bodily ritual gestures as they seek to engage body, mind, and spirit. The times of prayer are broadly as follows:

- dawn (*Fajar*)
- just after noon (*Zuhur*)
- afternoon/evening (*Asr*)
- following sunset (*Maghrib*)
- night-time (*Isha*)

Muslims welcome privacy or a quiet space during prayer times, and they must face towards Makkah (*Qibla*, to the south-east in the UK), often identified by an arrow on the ceiling or by using a phone app.

Diet

Muslims will eat only permitted food (*halal*) and will not eat or drink anything that is considered forbidden (*haram*). Halal food requires that Allah's name is invoked at the time the animal is killed. Lamb, beef, goat, and chicken, for example, are halal if a Muslim kills them and offers a prayer. Fish and eggs are also halal.

All products from pork, carrion (animals found dead) and blood are forbidden, as are all types of alcohol. In Britain, Muslims buy their meat from a Muslim butcher whenever possible. Generally, a Muslim does not eat available meat or food that contains animal fats in case it contains pork fat or fat from other animals not ritually slaughtered. N.B. Fish and eggs must be kept strictly separate from meat during preparation, unless absolutely sure that all food is halal. When away from home many Muslims will follow a vegetarian diet.

Fasting

Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan (the date varies each year). At this time Muslims will not eat or drink between dawn and sunset. The sick, infirm, or very old need not fast. Fasting is also excused: during menstruation, for 40 days after childbirth, while breastfeeding or during a long journey. However, some Muslims will choose to fast even if ill and you should try to accommodate this. This means providing adequate and acceptable meals during the hours of darkness and, wherever possible, adjusting medication to fit in with the fast. If the doctor says a patient should eat and drink more, you should explain to the patient that this is part of the medicine to assist recovery. It is important to recognise that a decision to fast is based on different priorities, not on ignorance or being uncooperative.

Washing and toilet

Muslims attach great importance to cleanliness. They must have running water (from a tap or poured from a jug) in toilets, as they consider toilet paper inadequate. If a bedpan must be used a container of clean water should accompany it. Muslims prefer to wash in free-flowing water and cannot accept the idea of sitting in a bath.

Ablution before prayers is necessary. The worshipper washes their hands and face, rinses their mouth, cleans their nostrils, washes their arms up to the elbows, wets the hands and runs them through the hair, cleans inside and behind the ears and lastly washes their feet up to the ankles. These are each performed three times. After menstruation women must wash their whole bodies. It is regarded as unclean to eat or perform religious ceremonies using the same hand that is used for toileting purposes.

Ideas of modesty and dress

Generally, a Muslim woman is not allowed to be examined or surrounded by male members of medical staff. It is always preferable that a female member of the medical staff is present. In certain cases, a Muslim woman may not agree to be examined or treated at all by a male staff member. In Islam free mixing of sexes is prohibited and there should be no physical contact between a woman and any man except her husband, son, brother, or father. Muslims should be accommodated in mixed wards only in emergencies. A Muslim woman may find it difficult to accept an X-ray gown because it is short. Many Muslim women wear a headscarf when out in public (*the hijab*) and some Muslim women will also choose to be fully covered with only their eyes and hands showing (*burka*). You should show sensitivity to the needs of a Muslim woman to dress herself appropriately.

Birth customs

Some Muslim women will refuse to be examined internally before giving birth and may be reluctant to be attended by a male obstetrician unless in an emergency. When a

Muslim child is born it is customary for the father (or a respected member of the local community), to whisper the *Adhan* into the baby's right ear. These words include the name of Allah the Creator and is followed by the Declaration of Faith: "There is no deity but Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah." Both fundamental pronouncements serve as the pivot around which the life of a Muslim rotates, hence their symbolic significance at birth.³ It normally lasts a minute or two and privacy would be appreciated.

A Muslim boy must be circumcised as soon as possible. Although Female Genital Mutilation is practised in some cultures it is not an Islamic practice and is against the law in Britain. It is considered as violence against women and girls and is child abuse for the latter.

Family planning

Strictly speaking an orthodox Muslim would not approve of family planning devices. In practice individuals vary widely in their attitudes. Information on family planning should be offered, but no pressure exerted. Any discussion should be in strict confidence, and never in front of visiting relatives or friends.

Death customs

A dying Muslim will wish to lie on their right-side facing Makkah (the *Qibla*). Familiar people can give comfort by reading to the patient verses from the Qur'an. It is an important religious duty to visit the sick and dying, so many visitors may arrive at any time.

Should a baby die at or after four months of pregnancy or soon after birth, they will be named, washed, shrouded, and buried in the usual manner. If the foetus dies before four months of pregnancy, then it should be wrapped in a clean cloth and buried.

The next of kin will want to arrange to wash the deceased's body before burial. In Islam the body must be buried as quickly as possible (cremation is forbidden). A post-mortem must be avoided if legally possible, as this is not allowed and causes considerable distress. Unless being donated, organs should all be buried with the body.

Blood transfusions, transplants, and organ donation

There are no issues relating to blood transfusions. Although organ donation has been permitted, it is a complicated issue for Muslims and will often be met with cultural reluctance. The decision would lie with the individual and their family in consultation with their local religious leader.

³ BMJ Journals, Vol. 84, Issue 1.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Jehovah's Witnesses were founded in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA by Charles Taze Russell in 1872, although they did not become known officially as such until 1931. They have approximately 8.7 million active members. Jehovah's Witnesses view themselves as Christian and regard Jesus Christ as the son of God. Jehovah's Witnesses consider their religion to be a restoration of original 1st century Christian theology. They accept both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible as inspired by God. They do not, however, use the symbol of the cross because they believe it to be of Pagan origin, and their places of worship are called Kingdom Halls. Jehovah's Witnesses believe it is important to share their views with others and are well known for calling on people at their homes and for their magazine The Watchtower.

Jehovah's Witnesses refuse blood transfusions and take a non-negotiable stance on this matter (see below).

Attitudes to healthcare staff and illness

Jehovah's Witnesses have a positive attitude towards healthcare staff and are willing to seek medical help and advice when sick. They may be keen to make sure that medical staff are aware they would reject blood transfusions. When Witnesses who live locally are hospitalised, they will receive pastoral support from family, friends, and elders in the nearby congregation. Patient Visitation Groups consisting of qualified ministers, have been established to provide pastoral support where Witnesses are hospitalised some distance from their home.

Religious practices

There are no specific religious practices that would affect a Witness while in hospital.

Diet

Jehovah's Witnesses reject foods containing blood (e.g., black pudding or meat that has not been properly bled) but have no other special dietary requirements. Some Jehovah's Witnesses may be vegetarian, and others may abstain from alcohol, but this is a personal choice. Jehovah's Witnesses do not smoke or use other tobacco products.

Fasting

Jehovah's Witnesses are not required to fast for religious reasons.

Washing and toilet

Washing and toilet present no unusual problems for Jehovah's Witnesses.

Ideas of modesty and dress

There are no points to be noted in this area and few Jehovah's Witnesses would object to being examined by doctors of the opposite sex.

Birth customs

There are no specific customs relating to birth itself for Jehovah's Witnesses.

Family planning

Married couples privately and responsibly determine if they will employ appropriate methods of family planning. However, Witnesses reject contraceptive methods that are abortive.

Deliberately induced abortion simply to avoid the birth of a child is unacceptable to Jehovah's Witnesses. Witnesses are strictly politically neutral and do not get involved in any debates or demonstrations on the abortion issue. In the very rare event at the time of childbirth that a choice must be made between the life of the mother and that of the child, the decision should be in line with the mother's wishes.

Death customs

Jehovah's Witnesses do not have special rituals for the sick or the dying. You should make every reasonable effort to provide medical assistance and comfort. Spiritual care will be provided by local Witnesses (friends, family, and Elders from the Kingdom Hall).

Blood transfusions, transplants, and organ donation

Jehovah's Witnesses carry on their person an Advance Decision to Refuse Specified Medical Treatment document. This document states they are not willing to receive blood transfusions (either whole blood, red cells, white cells, plasma, or platelets) under any circumstances. This document complies with the legal requirement of the Mental Capacity Act 2005. When entering the hospital, they should sign consent/release forms that reiterate this and specify the hospital care needed.

The scriptural understanding of Jehovah's Witnesses does not prohibit the use of derivatives from the primary components of blood such as albumin, fibrinogen, immunoglobulins, and clotting factors. Some Witness patients will refuse such derivatives, others may accept some or all such derivatives. This would be a personal choice. Procedures involving the use of the patient's own blood (e.g., cell salvage, kidney dialysis etc.) are also a matter of personal choice.

From the Witnesses perspective, while the Bible specifically forbids consuming blood, no Biblical command forbids the taking in of tissue or bone from another human. Therefore, whether to accept an organ transplant or make an organ donation is a personal decision for Witnesses.

Jehovah's Witnesses understand the challenges that their decisions on blood can sometimes pose for doctors and nurses. To help, they have established Hospital Liaison Committees to facilitate communication between medical staff and Witness patients. The HLC can supply medical papers, researched from peer reviewed journals dealing with alternative non-blood management strategies, to hospital departments and transfusion practitioners. They can also give presentations and answer practitioner questions in the promotion of mutual understanding and cooperation.

JUDAISM

Judaism is a religion of ethical monotheism (one God) and traces its origins to the patriarch Abraham (c.1700 BCE). It is perhaps most widely known by way of the ten commandments given to Moses (c. 1300 BCE). There are about 15 million Jews worldwide, the majority in Israel and North America. They are generally grouped into four branches: Orthodox (strict observance); Traditional/Conservative/Masorti; Reform/Liberal/Progressive and Secular/Cultural.

Attitudes to healthcare staff and illness

Most Jewish patients have a positive attitude towards healthcare staff and are willing to seek medical help and advice when sick.

Religious practices

One of the most important Jewish practices is Sabbath observance. The Jewish Sabbath (*Shabbat*) begins at dusk on Friday and ends with full darkness on Saturday night, a period of approximately 25-hours. It is a day of rest and begins and ends with ceremonies in the home.

If you are arranging travel for a Friday discharge, ask the patient if it is important to them to keep a strict Sabbath, and if so, make sure you leave adequate time for all discharge procedures, such as collecting prescriptions, so that the patient has enough time to get home before dusk.

Orthodox Jews will travel to hospital for admission on the Sabbath only in an emergency, but if discharged on a Sabbath will wait in hospital until nightfall when Sabbath ends before travelling home.

Observant Jewish men and women pray three times a day in the morning, afternoon, and evening, and would appreciate privacy for this. Men will wrap themselves in a prayer shawl, and during weekday morning prayers will wear phylacteries (small leather boxes containing scriptural passages) strapped to their head and arm. Any room or area provided for prayer should be clean, and, if possible, contain no religious items on display that may offend or distract them in their act of worship. It would be helpful to indicate which way is east.

Diet

Judaism lays down strict guidelines concerning many aspects of diet both in the type of food, its storage, and its preparation. Milk and meat must be kept separate. Some common unacceptable foods would be pork and shellfish.

It is forbidden to have a meal that includes both animal products and any dairy together (e.g., you must not put a slice of meat on buttered bread). This extends to milk in tea/coffee after eating a meat meal. Fish and eggs are 'neutral' and can be eaten with either.

Acceptable food is called *kosher*. Continuing to eat a kosher diet while in hospital or on a medically restricted diet poses a major problem for some Jewish people. However, as there is a wide range of religious practice by Jewish people, observance of the dietary laws will vary from patient to patient. Please ask how best to accommodate them and their normal practice.

The Festival of Passover, which occurs in the spring, is a time when there are additional dietary stringencies. Again, ask how to best accommodate the patient.

Fasting

Yom Kippur is the most important holy day of the year for Jews and falls in September/October. It is the Day of Atonement for the sins of the past year. Many Jews who do not observe any other Jewish custom will fast during Yom Kippur. It is a 25-hour fast beginning before sunset on the evening before and ending after nightfall. These restrictions can be lifted where a threat to life or health is involved.

Children under the age of nine and women in childbirth (from the time labour begins until three days after birth) are not permitted to fast, even if they want to. Older children and women from the third to the seventh day after childbirth are permitted to fast but are permitted to break the fast if they feel the need to do so. People with other illnesses would consult a physician and rabbi for advice.

There are five further fasts, four of them minor, that last from dawn to nightfall and a person is permitted to eat breakfast if up before sunrise. These minor fasts are only kept strictly by Orthodox Jews and there is a great deal of leniency in the minor fasts for people who have medical conditions or other difficulties with fasting.

Washing and toilet

On waking, Orthodox Jews will want to wash their hands as they may not eat or drink before doing so and will want to wash before eating bread. Some Orthodox Jews do not bathe or shower during major festivals or Shabbat (Friday sunset to Saturday evening) and some men prefer to be bearded or will only use an electric razor.

Ideas of modesty and dress

For the older generations and more Orthodox Jews, one usually exposes the body only in the privacy of the home and to a spouse. A Jewish woman may be reluctant to have any intimate physical examination, especially during menstruation. Women will probably wish to keep their arms and their legs above the knee always covered or expose only those parts of their body that are to be examined. For Orthodox patients, wherever possible the examiner should be of the same sex as the patient. However, if the only person available is of the opposite sex, this is acceptable as a last resort.

Both sexes may wish to keep their hair covered (Orthodox Jewish women may wear a wig, hat, scarf or snood and Orthodox Jewish men a skull cap (called a *yarmulke*, *kipah* or *kappel*). If the examination is to include the head, then discuss the removal of head coverings sensitively, and where appropriate offer an alternative (a theatre cap, for example).

Birth customs

A healthy male boy must be circumcised on the eighth day after birth, although this must be delayed for a premature or unhealthy baby. The ritual is performed by a trained and medically certified religious functionary and the child is named at the ceremony. If the mother and child are still at the hospital, a small room may be requested, and others of the family will attend.

Family planning

Contraception is not banned in the Jewish religion, but for strictly Orthodox Jews there are guidelines that need to be followed as to when and how it is appropriate. Couples may wish to consult their chosen rabbi, together with guidance from medical staff, before deciding.

Jews believe that until the head of a baby has left the womb of its mother, it does not gain full status as a living person. This means that where the mother may die if the pregnancy continues, Jewish law permits a therapeutic abortion to save the life of the mother at the expense of the child. In cases of rape or where the mental health of the mother is at risk if the pregnancy continues, the mother may wish to discuss the medical advice with her rabbi before deciding.

Baby death

If a child dies, the body should be treated in the same way as an adult. Jewish law requires the burial of miscarried foetuses, which should be delivered to the family or burial society.

End of life and post-mortem care

When the end approaches, a rabbi should be called to the bedside, if possible, to recite the final prayers.

When the body is laid out the hands should be placed by the sides, not crossed over the body. Since the body should be kept intact, Orthodox Jews often resist the possibility of an invasive post-mortem. Where non-invasive methods (e.g., MRI) are available these are to be preferred.

Traditionally the funeral should be conducted as soon as possible after death, and this is of great concern to Orthodox Jews. Strictly Orthodox Jews might ask that the body should be watched constantly by relatives or friends while psalms are recited.

Blood transfusions, transplants, and organ donation

Jewish law approves blood transfusion to achieve the desired medical outcomes. Where a limb has been amputated, strictly Orthodox Jews might request that the limb be preserved intact for later burial with the person, if this is possible.

Jewish law permits organ donation from dead bodies where there is a high chance of success for the specific recipient. Relatives of a potential donor will wish to consult an appropriate rabbi before deciding, and the hospital chaplain will help to facilitate this.

PAGANISM AND NEW AGE SPIRITUALITY

Paganism is an umbrella term for many spiritual beliefs and practices that include Wicca, Druidry, Heathenry, Odinism, Witchcraft and New Age Spiritualities amongst others.

Paganism has its roots in the pre-Christian religions of Europe and their observance of the seasonal cycles of life. Pagans understand deity to be manifest within nature and recognise divinity as taking many forms: goddesses and gods of various aspects of nature and of specific natural sites. Goddess worship has a central place in Paganism. Pagans often have an individual relationship with deity, and determine their own belief and ethics, guided by their tradition. Many British Pagans recognise Celtic gods and goddesses, but may also chose to work with other pantheons, such as Norse or Egyptian. "To most modern Pagans in the West, the whole of life is to be affirmed joyfully and without shame, as long as other people are not harmed by one's own tastes. Modern Pagans tend to be relaxed and at ease with themselves and others, and women have a dignity which is not always found outside Pagan circles."⁴

Pagans believe that nature is sacred and that the natural cycles of birth, growth and death observed in the world around us carry profoundly spiritual meanings. Human beings are seen as part of nature, along with other animals, trees, stones, plants, and everything else that is of this earth. Whilst many Pagans believe in some form of reincarnation, viewing death as a transition within a continuing process of existence, many also believe that after death, they will travel to the "Summerlands" or other afterlife dwellings where they will be with their family, friends, and ancestors.

Attitudes to healthcare staff and illness

Most Pagans have a positive attitude towards healthcare staff and are willing to seek medical help and advice when sick. Pagans may wish to access alternative therapies alongside conventional medicine.

Religious practices

Most Pagans worship the old pre-Christian gods and goddesses through seasonal festivals and other ceremonies. Observance of these festivals is very important to Pagans, and those in hospital will generally wish to celebrate them in some form. As there are many diverse traditions within Paganism, you should ask individual patients if they have any special requirements. Some Pagans may wish to have a small white candle, crystals or a small figure of a goddess or other deity on their locker. Others may prefer symbols representing their spiritual path such as a pentacle, Thor's hammer, or triskele (triple spiral). For some Pagans, sacred jewellery is particularly important.

Diet

For ethical reasons, many Pagans strongly prefer foods derived from organic farming and free-range livestock rearing, as well as seasonal and local foods. Many are vegetarian or vegan.

⁴ Pagan Federation website.

Fasting

There are no organised fast days, but some Pagans choose to fast in preparation for Alban Eilir (spring equinox).

Washing and toilet

Washing and toilet present no unusual problems for Pagans.

Ideas of modesty and dress

There are no points to be noted in this area and few Pagans would object to being examined by doctors of the opposite sex.

Birth customs

As Paganism celebrates life, birth is viewed as sacred and empowering. Pagan women will wish to make their own informed decisions regarding prenatal and neonatal care. Some Pagans will wish the experience of birth to be as natural as possible and may be reluctant to accept pain relief. If medical intervention is required, most Pagans understand and accept the need to protect the life of both mother and child.

Family planning

Pagans will generally plan pregnancies and use contraception as appropriate. Paganism emphasises women's control over their own bodies, and the weighty decisions relating to abortion are seen as a personal matter for the woman concerned, who will be supported in the choices she makes.

Death customs

Most Pagans view death as a transition within a continuing process of existence whether that is reincarnation, soul reunion or travelling to the "Summerlands" or another afterlife dwelling to be with their ancestors. Pagans accept death as a natural part of life and will wish to know when they are dying so that they may consciously prepare for it. Pagans may wish to have family and friends at the bedside in vigil during their final hours. For some it may be important to sing or chant, to have a candle lit or incense burning. A battery-operated candle is usually an acceptable substitute if necessary. Some may wish to have sacred objects or jewellery on their person or placed into their hands. In some traditions, this can include a blade.

After death, most Pagans would prefer that their body is left as undisturbed as possible. Family and friends may wish to wash the body or to place coins over the eyes. Any objects or jewellery placed on the body or in the hands should be treated with respect and left in place in so far as is reasonably practicable. Families may also wish to open a window to allow the passage of the soul.

Blood transfusions, transplants, and organ donation

Most Pagans would have no objection to blood transfusions and may receive transplants or donate organs for transplant. Such matters are determined by an individual's own ethics and values rather than by central teaching.

THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (ALSO KNOWN AS THE QUAKERS)

The Religious Society of Friends, also known as The Quakers, was founded by George Fox in Leicestershire around the middle of the 17th century. The foundational belief for this new movement was that everyone could have a direct, personal experience of God regardless of social status or church affiliation. God could speak directly to the heart of each person and guide their actions and decision-making. These quiet, inner promptings became known as the Inner Light and became commonly translated as 'that of God in everyone'. Fox's first followers were 'Friends of the Light' or 'Friends of the Truth'.

Quaker worship is based upon the silent waiting upon the promptings of the Spirit. Quakers meet silently for a Meeting for Worship, commonly held in a Meeting House. If someone discerns that they are being prompted by the Spirit to speak, they share it with others. Among modern British Quakers, belief in "God" ranges from acceptance of the traditional Christian norm to denial of the existence of an external deity. A few Quakers may also belong to other faiths.

Guided by the Inward Light, Quakers have been led to certain values and principles that influence their decision making, both in their personal lives and in their relating to the world. These commonly held values and principles are known as Quaker Testimonies and offer guidance on how to bring about and promote Peace, Truth and Integrity, Equality, Simplicity, Community and Sustainability/Care for the World."⁵

Quakers presently number about 270,000 members worldwide, including 17,000 in Britain.

Attitudes to healthcare staff and illness

Quakers positively support anyone trying to alleviate the pain, distress or suffering of others.

Religious practices

Quakers may use the chapel for quiet in a peaceful setting. They may read the Bible (or other religious text) and may want to pray, reflect, meditate or be mindful for a while.

Diet

There are no rules to follow.

Fasting

There are no rules to follow.

Washing and toilet

There are no rules to follow.

⁵ Friends General Conference.

Ideas of modesty and dress

There are no special rules to follow.

Death customs

Quakers may want to read religious texts or to say prayers, or they may want visits from their family or Quaker group. There are no religious rituals to follow, simply to show respect in whatever way possible.

Birth customs

Quakers may want to give thanks (in any way possible e.g., blessing, prayer of thankfulness). There are no baptism/rituals required as Quakers believe that every child born is a child of God and part of God's family.

Family planning

This is an individual's choice.

Blood transfusions, transplants, and organ donation

This is by individual choice.

SIKHISM

The Sikh faith is a distinct religion revealed through the teachings of ten Gurus (messengers of God), the first of whom was Guru Nanak Dev Ji, born in 1469 CE in the Punjab, India. In 1708 the tenth and the last human Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, vested spiritual authority in the Holy Sikh Scriptures (Guru Granth Sahib Ji) and temporal authority in the community of baptised Sikhs (Khalsa Panth).

Sikhs strictly believe that there is one God, who is both transcendent and immanent (present in all things and everyone). Although above human comprehension, God can be realised and experienced through contemplation and service. The object of a Sikh's life is to develop consciousness of God and to receive God's grace through truthful living and selfless service to humankind in the context of a family life.

A Sikh's way of life is guided by the following principles:

- *remembering and praying to God at all times*
- *earning a living by honest means*
- *sharing with the poor and needy*
- *selfless service to God and his creation*
- *treating all human beings as equal*

Baptised Sikhs wear five articles of faith:

1. *uncut hair (Kesh)*
2. *a small wooden comb (Kangha)*
3. *an iron/steel bangle (Kara)*
4. *a short sword (Kirpan), and*
5. *special shorts (Kachhera)*

These articles have deep spiritual and moral significance, forming part of the Sikh Code of Ethics and Discipline. The articles of faith must not be removed.

A Sikh is likely to have a personal name (common to both sexes), a middle name ('Singh' (lion) for all males and 'Kaur' (princess) for all females), followed by a family name.

Attitudes to healthcare staff and illness

Most Sikhs have a positive attitude towards healthcare staff and are willing to seek medical help and advice when sick.

Religious practices

Sikhs pray in the morning and evening and are also expected to recite hymns whenever they have time in the day. Some privacy for prayers will be appreciated.

Diet

Sikhs who have received the Amrit Ceremony (baptised) are vegetarians. They will exclude from their diet eggs, fish and any ingredients with animal derivatives or cooked in animal fat.

Dairy produce is acceptable provided it is free from animal fat e.g., cheese made from non-animal rennet. It is essential to avoid contamination with meat at all stages of preparation, storage and serving. Some Sikhs will only eat food prepared by their own families. Non-vegetarian Sikhs will only eat meat that has been slaughtered according to their own rites (*jhatka*) and not halal (Muslim) or kosher (Jewish) rites.

Practicing Sikhs will also refrain from alcohol, tobacco, and other intoxicants. The use of tobacco or alcohol in any form is strictly forbidden to baptised Sikhs. It is therefore very important that they are accommodated in places where smoking or consumption of alcohol is not permitted.

Fasting

Sikhs do not fast.

Washing and toilet

Sikhs prefer to wash in free-flowing water, rather than sitting in a bath. They will appreciate having water provided in the same room as the toilet, or with a bedpan when they must use one. Sikhs will want to wash their hands and rinse their mouth before meals.

The uncut hair is kept clean and neat by washing regularly and combing normally twice a day. If the patient is not well enough, nursing staff may assist in washing and combing, and such help will be welcome.

Ideas of modesty and dress

Some Sikh women would prefer a female doctor when being examined or treated. Sikh women should be accommodated in mixed wards only in emergencies. A Sikh woman may find it difficult to accept an X-ray gown because it is short.

As mentioned above, the five articles of the Sikh faith must not be removed. Baptised Sikh men always have their uncut hair in a turban, and baptised Sikh women will also cover their hair. You should be particularly sensitive about removing the turban, as it is worn to maintain the sanctity of Kesh (hair) and is treated with the utmost respect. Sikh women wear a long scarf (*chunni*) for the same purpose.

Birth customs

The birth of a baby is a joyous occasion. The baby may not be named for several days as the initial for the name is obtained from the first letter of a verse or hymn from the writings of the Guru Granth Sahib Ji. The family may also have the baby baptised by having *Amrit* (holy water) placed on the tongue by a family member or baptised Sikh.

Baby death

Babies who are stillborn or die around the time of birth will be cremated, and the body of a stillborn baby should be given to the parents to perform the funeral rites. The child should simply be wrapped in a plain white sheet to await the arrival of a relative who will perform the Last Offices.

Family planning

Sikhs have no objection to family planning.

Death customs

In the final stages of illness, a Sikh patient will be comforted by reciting hymns from the Sikh Holy Scriptures. A Giana (priest) from the local Gurdwara (Sikh place of worship) or another practicing Sikh may do this with the patient. Sikhs are cremated.

Cremation should take place as soon as possible after death, and friends and relatives will prepare the body the night before the cremation at the funeral home. After death and identification, the body or parts of the body should be covered with a plain white sheet or shroud. If the condition of the body permits, the eyes and mouth should be closed, and limbs straightened with arms placed straight beside the body.

Nursing staff must ensure that none of the five articles of faith on the body of a Sikh are disturbed. It is also important not to trim the hair or beard, and the hair on the head should be kept covered.

Sikhs do not like the idea of a post-mortem but will accept it if it is legally unavoidable.

Blood transfusions, transplants, and organ donation

Most Sikhs would have no objection to blood transfusions and may receive transplants or donate organs for transplantation. However, regarding transplants, especially the donation of organs, the decision rests with the individual or their family, or both. In the absence of close relatives, a medical officer in charge may take whatever action he or she considers necessary to save the patient's life.

SPIRITUALISM

Spiritualism is a recent religious movement with rituals, doctrinal components, a belief in a transcendent realm; it has an experiential dimension and elements of other religions. Modern Spiritualism sees itself as entirely rational, with no element of the supernatural. For Spiritualists, this is what distinguishes their beliefs from the concept of life after death found in many other faiths. The movement began in the USA in the middle of the 19th century. Those who follow it believe that communication with spirits is possible, but beyond this, Spiritualism can include a very wide range of beliefs and worldviews.

Spiritualists believe in freedom of religion and freedom of worship, worshipping God in your own way. Spiritualism in Britain and has a network of groups across the country. The total of Spiritualists' National Union affiliated and associated bodies in the UK is 360.⁶ A Spiritualist church is a place where Spiritualism is practiced; this could be a special church building, hall or any other suitable place. During these services a medium will 'link' with the spirit-world. A weekly 'Divine' service takes place (often on Sundays), consisting of prayers, hymns, a reading, and a philosophical talk from a medium, usually with the help of their Spirit Guide. The medium also spends time connecting with the spirit-world communicating messages to members of the congregation.

There is no sacred text, relying instead on the Seven Principles - a model of living to guide rather than be preached, allowing followers to interpret the Spiritualist values. The Spiritualists' National Union in the UK bases itself on the Seven Principles, which all full members must accept. These are:

1. *the Fatherhood of God*
2. *the Brotherhood of Man*
3. *the Communion of Spirits and the Ministry of Angels*
4. *the continuous existence of the human soul*
5. *personal responsibility*
6. *compensation and retribution hereafter for all the good and evil deeds done on earth*
7. *eternal progress open to every human soul*

The National Association of Spiritualist Churches in the USA has nine principles which provide more information about Spiritualist beliefs:

1. *we believe in Infinite Intelligence*
2. *we believe that the phenomena of Nature, both physical and spiritual, are the expression of Infinite intelligence*
3. *we affirm that a correct understanding of such expression and living in accordance therewith, constitute true religion*
4. *we affirm that the existence and personal identity of the individual continue after the change called death*
5. *we affirm that communication with the so-called dead is a fact, scientifically proven by the phenomena of Spiritualism*
6. *we believe that the highest morality is contained in the Golden Rule: 'Whatsoever you would that others should do unto you, do you also unto them.'*

⁶ https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/spiritualism/worship/worship_1.shtml

7. *we affirm the moral responsibility of the individual, and that we make our own happiness or unhappiness as we obey or disobey Nature's physical and spiritual laws*
8. *we affirm that the doorway to reformation is never closed against any human soul here or hereafter*
9. *we affirm that the precepts of Prophecy and Healing contained in all sacred texts are Divine attributes proven through Mediumship*

Healing

Spiritualism practices spiritual healing, carried out by Healing Mediums, and this has a very special part to play within their churches.⁷ The healing itself is one of a spiritual nature influencing all levels: mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual. This requires no faith or belief on the part of the person seeking healing, but healing should be given only in response to an invitation from the patient or the patient's representative. There are three methods of healing:

1. *Contact Healing* is when the Healing Medium seeks permission to place their hands on to the patient during healing.
2. *Distant Healing* is healing sent by the power of thought to someone who is physically present but is not receiving contact healing.
3. *Absent Healing* is when the patient is not physically present and healing thoughts are extended to them.

Code of Conduct and Healing and the Law

SNU Healers are certified and trained through the SNU, adhering to their Code of Conduct, and are subject to the rules and regulations of the SNU. They understand the legal implications of such prayer and undergo practical and theoretical training. SNU Healers should hold an up-to-date accreditation card issued by the SNU, which certifies their name, registration number and photograph.

Attitudes to healthcare staff and illness

Spiritual Healing is practiced as a complementary therapy. Individuals are required to be aware of their own well-being and are encouraged to continue any medical treatment that has been prescribed for them. Attitudes towards healthcare staff should therefore be supportive.

Religious practices while in hospital

A Spiritualist patient may want to receive prayer from a Spiritualist Healer.

Diet

Spiritualists have no rules to follow; this is up to the individual.

Fasting

There are no rules to follow.

Washing and toilet

⁷ Spiritualist's National Union website SNU.org.uk

Spiritualists have no special rules to follow.

Ideas of modesty and dress

There are no special rules to follow.

Death customs

When approaching death, Spiritualists may want visits from a Spiritualist medium. There are no rituals to be undertaken at or after death.

Birth customs

There are no birth, baptism, or ritual requirements.

Family planning

This is individual choice.

Blood transfusions, transplants, and organ donation

This is individual choice.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Baha'i

Birth customs

The Baha'i have no rituals associated with the birth of a child but may wish to express gratitude to God through prayer. Because they believe life begins at conception, a miscarriage is a great loss, and the foetus should be treated with respect. Wherever possible the remains should be returned to the parents or local Baha'i community for burial.

Family planning

Family planning is left up to the individual and most means of contraception are acceptable. Abortion is a weighty matter of conscience taken in the light of Baha'i teachings and medical advice. IVF and artificial insemination are allowed if the sperm and egg are from the couple themselves.

Brahma Kumaris

Birth customs and family planning

Dedicated Brahma Kumaris are encouraged to live a celibate life, so it would be unusual for someone from the Brahma Kumaris tradition to be pregnant or giving birth. Therefore, be aware that the mother may be struggling with this issue.

Buddhist

Birth customs

As practices are wide-ranging within Buddhism, it is important to ask the patient.

Family planning

There is no established doctrine about family planning for Buddhists, although they are generally reluctant to tamper with the natural development of life. In theory, a Buddhist may accept all methods of family planning, but in practice, it is the responsibility of the individual to decide.

Chinese Ancient Traditions

Birth customs

Pregnant women will often take ginger tea. A Chinese woman may ask not to wash her hair for one month after the delivery of a baby; this is an important tradition, and she may be unwilling to go for a shower or sit in a bath. She will take great care of her body and will not take any form of exercise during this month. When a child is born, relatives may visit with presents such as chicken soup, clothing for the baby, and eggs that have been dyed red.

Family planning

Generally, there are no problems with family planning although there is often a certain reserve in Chinese cultures to talking about it, and it should not be mentioned in the presence of others. Family-planning devices, sterilisation and abortion are acceptable.

Christians

Family planning

For many Christians, family planning is an individual choice. All Christian churches uphold the sanctity of life, and every effort is made to preserve life. Certain churches discourage their members from using artificial means of contraception, for example, the Catholics. Abortion is also strongly condemned in several Christian denominations while other denominations leave it up to the individual. Be sensitive when discussing these issues.

Birth customs

There are no birth rituals. If a baby is seriously ill, stillborn or dies shortly after birth, it is customary for parents to be offered the services of the chaplain who, at the parent's request, may baptise (if the infant is still alive) or offer a blessing and naming ceremony. In an emergency, any baptised Christian can perform a baptism if requested. Some Christians do not practise infant baptism and may prefer that sick or dying babies receive a blessing instead.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)

Family planning

Although Latter-day Saints are not encouraged to use contraception, the Church does not explicitly teach that contraception is wrong and makes no doctrinal statement about it. The Church teaches that sterilization should only be considered where medical conditions jeopardise life or health. Decisions about birth control and the consequences of those decisions rest solely with each married couple. Latter-day Saints condemn abortion on demand but believe that some circumstances may justify this. These would be when pregnancy is the result of incest or rape, when the life or health of the mother is judged by a competent medical authority to be in serious jeopardy, or when the foetus is identified by a competent medical authority to have severe defects that will not allow the baby to survive beyond birth.

Hinduism

Birth customs

Most Hindu woman will prefer a female doctor when being examined or treated. Many Hindus will wish to conduct rites of passage ('Sanskaras') at this time. There are sixteen of these through one's lifetime: 3 are before birth, 1 is birth itself, and 1 is around 10-12 days after birth. Any or all of these may be encountered by hospital staff. Relatives may want to ensure that the mother has complete rest for 40 days after birth; this is based on the belief that a woman is at her weakest at this time and is very susceptible to chills, backache etc. If there is a need to separate mother and baby for any reason this should be done tactfully as she may prefer to always keep the baby with her. Some Hindus

consider it crucial to record the time of birth (to the minute) so that a Hindu priest can cast the child's horoscope accurately.

Family planning

There is no objection to family planning from the religious point of view. However, there may be strong social pressures on women to go on having babies, particularly if no son has yet been born, and you should consider involving her husband in any discussion of family planning (not detracting from protection of confidentiality or consent).

Humanists

Family planning

Humanists are strong advocates of birth control and for the right to choose in relation to abortion.

Islam

Birth customs

Some Muslim women will refuse to be examined internally before giving birth and may be reluctant to be attended by a male obstetrician unless in an emergency. When a Muslim child is born it is customary for the father (or a respected member of the local community), to whisper the *Adhan* into the baby's right ear. These words include the name of Allah the Creator and is followed by the Declaration of Faith. It normally lasts a minute or two and privacy would be appreciated. A Muslim boy must be circumcised as soon as possible. Although Female Genital Mutilation is practised in some cultures it is not an Islamic practice and is against the law in Britain. It is considered as violence against women and girls and is child abuse for the latter.

Family planning

Strictly speaking an orthodox Muslim would not approve of family planning devices. In practice individuals vary widely in their attitudes. Information on family planning should be offered, but no pressure exerted. Any discussion should be in strict confidence, and never in front of visiting relatives or friends.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Birth customs

There are no specific customs relating to birth itself for Jehovah's Witnesses.

Family planning

Married couples privately and responsibly determine if they will employ appropriate methods of family planning. However, Witnesses reject contraceptive methods that are abortive. Deliberately induced abortion simply to avoid the birth of a child is unacceptable to Jehovah's Witnesses. Witnesses are strictly politically neutral and do not get involved in any debates or demonstrations on the abortion issue. In the very rare event at the time of childbirth that a choice must be made between the life of the mother and that of the child, the decision should be in line with the mother's wishes.

Judaism

Birth customs

A healthy male boy must be circumcised on the eighth day after birth, although this must be delayed for a premature or unhealthy baby. The ritual is performed by a trained and medically certified religious functionary and the child is named at the ceremony. If the mother and child are still at the hospital, a small room may be requested, and others of the family will attend.

Family planning

Contraception is not banned in the Jewish religion, but for strictly Orthodox Jews there are guidelines as to when and how it is appropriate. Couples may consult their chosen rabbi, together with guidance from medical staff, before deciding. Jews believe that until the head of a baby has left the womb of its mother, it does not gain full status as a living person. This means that where the mother may die if the pregnancy continues, Jewish law permits a therapeutic abortion to save the life of the mother at the expense of the child. In cases of rape or where the mental health of the mother is at risk if the pregnancy continues, the mother may wish to discuss the medical advice with her rabbi before deciding.

Baby death

Jewish law requires burial of miscarried foetuses.

Paganism and New Age Spirituality

Birth customs

As Paganism celebrates life, birth is viewed as sacred and empowering. Pagan women will wish to make their own informed decisions regarding prenatal and neonatal care. Some Pagans will wish the experience of birth to be as natural as possible and may be reluctant to accept pain relief. If medical intervention is required, most Pagans understand and accept the need to protect both lives.

Family planning

Pagans will generally plan pregnancies and use contraception as appropriate. Paganism emphasises women's control over their own bodies, and the weighty decisions relating to abortion are seen as a personal matter for the woman concerned, who will be supported in the choices she makes.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Birth customs

Quakers may want to give thanks (e.g., blessing, prayer of thankfulness), but as every child is believed to be part of God's family, baptism is not required.

Family planning

This is an individual's choice.

Sikhism

Birth customs

The birth of a baby is joyous. The baby may not be named for several days as the initial for the name is obtained from the first letter of a verse or hymn from sacred writings. The family may also have the baby baptised by having *Amrit* (holy water) placed on the tongue by a family member or baptised Sikh.

Baby death

Babies who are stillborn or die around the time of birth will be cremated, and the body of a stillborn baby should be given to the parents to perform the funeral rites. The child should simply be wrapped in a plain white sheet to await the arrival of a relative who will perform the Last Offices.

Family planning

Sikhs have no objection to family planning.

Spiritualism**Birth customs**

There are no baptism rituals required.

Family planning

Spiritualists exercise individual choice.

DEATH CUSTOMS

WHEN A PATIENT IS CLOSE TO DEATH OR HAS JUST DIED

Baha'i

There are no special ritual before death. Baha'is treat the body of a deceased person with great respect. Baha'i law prescribes that burial should take place at no more than one hour's journey from the place of death. The body should not be cremated or embalmed. Funerals are normally arranged by the family of the deceased if available, or on occasions by the local Baha'i Assembly. Baha'i relatives or friends will wish to say prayers for the dead. Autopsies and post-mortem examinations are acceptable if necessary. Because they believe life begins at conception, a miscarriage is a great loss, and the foetus should be treated with respect. Wherever possible the remains should be returned to the parents or local Baha'i community for burial arrangements to be made.

Brahma Kumaris

There are no special rituals before death. Brahma Kumaris favour cremation over burial. Dedicated Brahma Kumaris would prefer the body to be in special white clothing although there is some flexibility in this. Details of the funeral arrangements are always discussed with the family of the deceased so that the family's wishes are honoured.

Buddhist

Before death

The manner of consideration for the dying will depend on the Buddhist group. If you need specific guidance about a patient's particular school of Buddhism or want to arrange counselling from a fellow Buddhist practitioner, then you should find out from the patient or family which specific form or school of Buddhism the patient practises and ask them for local contact details. The hospital chaplain can help with this if necessary. The most important consideration relates to the patient's state of mind at the time of death for this will influence how they experience the intermediate or '*bardo*' states. Nearing the time of death, the state of mind should ideally be one of peace, as the patient may wish to meditate and ask for a quiet place. They might wish to avoid medications that cloud the mind at this stage, wishing for a Buddha figure to be close by, and may use a candle or incense stick if allowed. Some patients would like counselling from a fellow Buddhist or priest with recitation of prayers or sacred texts.

After death

In many schools of Buddhism there is no ritual requirement after death and normal hospital procedures are accepted. However, some Buddhists hold strong views about how the body should be treated after death. It would be helpful to ask about such views before death occurs, to avoid unnecessary distress to relatives and friends. After death, Buddhist traditions may be for the family to request prayers from the Sangha (the local practicing Buddhist community) of the appropriate school of Buddhism, and to perform certain actions and dedicate

them to the dead person. An experienced Buddhist practitioner may perform special rituals. Beliefs on post-mortem vary; some patients and relatives may object due to the belief that the mind may stay in the body for some time after the heart has stopped (and therefore interfering with internal organs may undermine the optimal dissolution of consciousness). Buddhists can dispose of a dead body by any of the four elements (earth, air, fire, and water). As traditions vary, it is important to know the patient's own wishes and/or consult with their family.

Chinese Ancient Traditions

Death customs

Funeral and mourning customs vary widely in the Chinese ancient traditions, making it very difficult to generalise for all Chinese. It is important to consult the patient and/or their family in advance. In the case of a child, some traditions prefer things to be kept quiet and simple with little or no fuss. In some instances, a coffin may not be used – simply a sheet. There may be no formal funeral service for a child, and many do not like to mention a child who has died at all, so counselling may be difficult. Families might not like to be given back any of the child's belongings as it is considered bad luck. On the death of a child, the burial takes place at once with no special ceremony. In the case of adults, the body is simply bathed and covered in a white sheet. Some Chinese traditions still follow the custom of clothing the body in white or traditional Chinese dress. Muslim Chinese may object to post-mortems.

Christians

Death customs

Dying patients of all Christian denominations will often wish the services of the appropriate chaplain or minister or priest, this is especially true for Catholic patients who will receive the Last Rites.

Baby Death

If a baby is stillborn or dies shortly after birth, it is customary for parents to be offered the services of the hospital chaplain who, at the parent's request, may offer a blessing and/or naming ceremony.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)

Death customs

There are no special rituals associated with dying or death for any age group. After death, a deceased member should be washed and dressed in a shroud according to hospital protocol. A Latter-day Saint who has participated in the Endowment Ceremony Of Their Faith should be buried wearing their special undergarments and other special clothes, and members of the Church will dress the body before by arrangement with the funeral director. Generally, cremation is not encouraged, although the family of the deceased could decide on either burial or cremation.

Hinduism

Before death

If a Hindu patient is dying in hospital, relatives may wish to bring money and clothes for them to touch before they are given to the needy. They will wish to keep a bedside vigil (if the visitors are not allowed to go to the bedside themselves, they will be grateful if a nurse can do this for them while they wait). Some relatives will welcome an opportunity to sit with the dying patient and read from a holy book, recite prayers, or chant hymns. For many families, giving the patient water from the holy river, the Ganges is very important.

After death

After death the body should always be kept covered. Sacred objects should not be removed. Relatives will wish to wash the body and put on new clothes before taking it from the hospital. Traditionally the eldest son of the deceased should take a leading part in this, however young he may be. If a post-mortem is unavoidable, and, unless they are being donated, Hindus will wish all organs to be returned to the body before cremation (or burial for children under five years old in some Hindu traditions). Most family members would like to receive the ashes after the cremation of the body and would like to immerse the ashes in the holy river Ganges in India or in flowing water or on the ancestral land of the family.

Humanists

Death customs

Many Humanists will have a living will or advance directive. Humanists will want a Humanist funeral. Many Humanists endorse death with dignity and would therefore favour legal voluntary euthanasia (with appropriate safeguards) for adults.

Islam

Death customs

A dying Muslim will wish to lie on their right-side facing Makkah (the *Qibla*). Familiar people can give comfort by reading to the patient verses from the Qur'an. It is an important religious duty to visit the sick and dying, so many visitors may arrive at any time. Should a baby die at or after four months of pregnancy or soon after birth, they will be named, washed, shrouded, and buried in the usual manner. If the foetus dies before four months of pregnancy, then it should be wrapped in a clean cloth and buried. The next of kin will want to arrange to wash the deceased's body before burial. In Islam the body must be buried as quickly as possible (cremation is forbidden). A post-mortem must be avoided if legally possible, as this is not allowed and causes considerable distress. Unless being donated, organs should all be buried with the body.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Death customs

Jehovah's Witnesses do not have special rituals for the sick or the dying. You should make every reasonable effort to provide medical assistance and comfort. Spiritual care will be provided by local Witnesses (friends, family, and Elders from the Kingdom Hall).

Judaism

Baby death

If a child dies, the body should be treated in the same way as an adult. Jewish law requires the burial of miscarried fetuses, which should be delivered to the family or burial society.

Death customs

When the end approaches, a rabbi should be called to the bedside, if possible, to recite the final prayers. When the body is laid out the hands should be placed by the sides, not crossed over the body. Since the body should be kept intact, Orthodox Jews often resist the possibility of an invasive post-mortem. Where non-invasive methods (e.g., MRI) are available these are to be preferred. Traditionally a funeral should be conducted as soon as possible after death; this is of great concern to Orthodox Jews. Orthodox Jews might ask that the body should be watched constantly by relatives or friends while psalms are recited.

Paganism and New Age Spirituality

Death customs

Most Pagans view death as a transition within a continuing process of existence (reincarnation, soul reunion or travelling to the "Summerlands" or another afterlife dwelling to be with their ancestors). Death is a natural part of life and will wish to know when they are dying so that they may consciously prepare for it. Pagans may want family and friends at the bedside in vigil during their final hours; it may be important to sing or chant, to have a candle lit or incense burning (a battery-operated candle is usually an acceptable substitute). Some may wish to have sacred objects or jewellery on their person or placed into their hands. In some traditions this can include a blade. After death, most Pagans prefer that their body is left as undisturbed as possible. Family and friends may wish to wash the body, or to place coins over the eyes. Objects or jewellery placed on the body or in the hands should be treated with respect and left in place if practicable. A window may be opened to allow the passage of the soul.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Death customs

Quakers may want to read religious texts or to say prayers, or they may want visits from their family or Quaker group. There are no religious rituals to follow, simply to show respect in whatever way possible.

Sikhism

Baby death

The body of a stillborn baby should be given to the parents to perform the funeral rites. The child should simply be wrapped in a plain white sheet to await the arrival of a relative who will perform the Last Offices. The baby will be for cremation.

Death customs

In the final stages of illness, a Sikh patient will be comforted by reciting hymns from the Sikh Holy Scriptures. A Giana (priest) from the local Gurdwara (Sikh place of worship) or another practicing Sikh may do this with the patient. Sikhs are cremated. Cremation should take place as soon as possible after death, and friends and relatives will prepare the body the night before the cremation at the funeral home. After death and identification, the body or parts of the body should be covered with a plain white sheet or shroud. If the condition of the body permits, the eyes and mouth should be closed, and limbs straightened with arms placed straight beside the body. Nursing staff must ensure that none of the five articles of faith on the body of a Sikh is disturbed. It is also important not to trim the hair or beard, and the hair on the head should be kept covered. Sikhs do not like the idea of a post-mortem but will accept it if it is legally unavoidable.

Spiritualism

Death customs

When approaching death, Spiritualists may want visits from a Spiritualist medium. There are no rituals to be undertaken at or after death.

ATTITUDES TO ORGAN TRANSPLANTS

Baha'i

Most Baha'is would have no objection to blood transfusions and may receive transplants or donate organs for transplant. Potential complications may arise if the body needs to be moved for the organs to be harvested. The remains should be returned to the original hospital or to the family for Baha'i burial.

Brahma Kumaris

Brahma Kumaris would have no objection to blood transfusion or organ transplants. Decisions about the donation of organs are left to the individual.

Buddhist

There are no religious objections to blood transfusions or blood products, but attitudes amongst Buddhists to organ transplants differ. All consider donating an organ during life an act of compassion. After death, many Buddhists will have no religious objections since helping others is fundamental to Buddhist belief. However, some may decline to donate organs after death because they believe this affects the consciousness of the deceased.

Chinese Ancient Traditions

Most Chinese traditions will agree to blood transfusion. Organ transplant can cause difficulty as traditionally the body should be buried whole, so they may be reluctant to donate organs or tissue. For Chinese of Buddhist, Christian or Muslim faith, please see the relevant sections.

Christian

Most Christians do not object to blood transfusions and may receive transplants or donate organs for transplant. Jehovah's Witnesses are an exception to this (see the relevant section for further details).

Hinduism

Most Hindus have no objection to blood transfusions and may receive transplants or donate organs for transplant. Organ donation is very much encouraged by Hinduism, and increasingly within British Hindu communities.

Humanist

Most Humanists may receive transplants or donate organs for transplantation.

Islam (Muslim)

There are no issues relating to blood transfusions. Although organ donation has been permitted, it is a complicated issue for Muslims and will often be met with cultural reluctance. The decision would lie with the individual and their family in consultation with their local religious leader.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witnesses carry on their person an Advance Decision to Refuse Specified Medical Treatment document. This document states they are not willing to receive blood transfusions (either whole blood, red cells, white cells, plasma, or platelets) under any circumstances. This document complies with the legal requirement of the Mental Capacity Act 2005. When entering the hospital, they should sign consent/release forms that reiterate this and specify the hospital care needed. The scriptural understanding of Jehovah's Witnesses does not prohibit the use of derivatives from the primary components of blood such as albumin, fibrinogen, immunoglobulins, and clotting factors. Some Witness patients will refuse such derivatives, others may accept some or all such derivatives. This would be a personal choice. Procedures involving the use of the patient's own blood (e.g., cell salvage, kidney dialysis etc.) are also a matter of personal choice. From the Witnesses perspective, while the Bible specifically forbids consuming blood, no Biblical command forbids the taking in of tissue or bone from another human. Therefore, whether to accept an organ transplant or make an organ donation is a personal decision for Witnesses.

Judaism

Jewish law approves blood transfusion to achieve the desired medical outcomes. Where a limb has been amputated, strictly Orthodox Jews might request that the limb be preserved intact for later burial with the person, if this is possible. Jewish law permits organ donation from dead bodies where there is a high chance of success for the specific recipient. Relatives of a potential donor will wish to consult an appropriate rabbi before deciding, and the hospital chaplain will help to facilitate this.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon)

Most Latter-day Saints would receive transplants or donate organs for transplantation.

Paganism and New Age Spirituality

Most Pagans would have no objection to blood transfusions and may receive transplants or donate organs for transplant. Such matters are determined by an individual's own ethics and values rather than by central teaching.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

This is by individual choice.

Sikhism

Most Sikhs would have no objection to blood transfusions and may receive transplants or donate organs for transplantation. However, regarding transplants, especially the donation of organs, the decision rests with the individual or their family, or both. In the absence of close relatives, a medical officer in charge may take whatever action he or she considers necessary to save the patient's life.

Spiritualism

This is by individual choice.

RELIGIONS WITH SPECIAL DIETARY CUSTOMS

Baha'is have no specific dietary requirements.

Brahma Kumaris are encouraged to eat a lacto-vegetarian diet (dairy products permitted) and discouraged from using alcohol, tobacco, and other recreational drugs. Most Brahma Kumaris do not use onions or garlic in cooking and prefer to have their food cooked and blessed by fellow Brahma Kumaris.

Buddhists are usually vegetarian or vegan due to the first precept and respect for other sentient beings. Some may follow a precept that involves eating only one main meal a day and this is usually eaten before midday. However, some Buddhists are non-vegetarian as the Buddha asked his monks to eat whatever they received. As practises vary, it is important to consult the patient.

Christians have no universal dietary regulations.

Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (Mormon) live by a health code known as the Word of Wisdom. It warns against the use of stimulants and substances that are harmful to the body and promotes healthy eating. LDS patients will refuse tea, coffee, alcohol, and tobacco. Hot chocolate, Ovaltine, and other such drinks normally available on hospital wards are acceptable.

Most Hindus Most Hindus are vegetarian and there is a very small, but slowly growing vegan movement within Hinduism. The cow is viewed as a sacred animal so even meat-eating Hindus may not eat beef. Some Hindus will eat eggs, some will not, and some will also refuse onion or garlic; it is best to ask each individual. Generally, dairy products are acceptable so long as they are free of animal rennet, so ask the individual. It is important to remember that strict vegetarians/vegans will be unhappy about eating vegetarian items if they are served from the same plate or with the same utensils as meat. Hand washing before and after meals is customary, as many Hindus prefer to eat using the fingers. Fasting is a regular feature of the Hindu religion, but few Hindus insist on fasting in hospital.

Muslims will eat only permitted food (*halal*) and will not eat or drink anything that is considered forbidden (*haram*). Halal food requires that Allah's name is invoked at the time the animal is killed. Lamb, beef, goat, and chicken, for example, are halal if a Muslim kills them and offers a prayer. Fish and eggs are also halal but must be kept strictly separate from meat during preparation. All products from pork, carrion (animals found dead) and blood are forbidden, as are all types of alcohol. Generally, a Muslim does not eat available meat or food that contains animal fats in case it contains pork fat or fat from other animals not ritually slaughtered. When away from home many Muslims will follow a vegetarian diet. Healthy Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan and will not eat or drink anything between dawn and sunset. Although excused if ill, some Muslim patients will still choose to fast, and you should try to accommodate this. This means providing adequate and acceptable meals during the hours of darkness and, wherever possible, adjusting medication to fit in with the fast. If the doctor says a patient should eat and drink more, you should explain to the patient that this is part of the medicine to assist recovery. It is important to recognise that a decision to fast is based on different priorities, not on ignorance or being uncooperative.

Jehovah's Witnesses reject foods containing blood (e.g., black pudding or meat that has not been properly bled) but have no other dietary requirements. Some may be vegetarian, and others may abstain from alcohol, but this is a personal choice.

Judaism lays down strict guidelines concerning many aspects of diet both in the type of food, its storage, and its preparation. Milk and meat must be kept separate. Some common unacceptable foods would be pork and shellfish. It is forbidden that Jews have a meal that includes both animal products and any dairy together (e.g., you must not put a slice of meat on buttered bread). This extends to milk in tea/coffee after eating a meat meal. Fish and eggs are 'neutral' and can be eaten with either. Acceptable food is called *Kosher*. Continuing to eat a kosher diet while in hospital or on a medically restricted diet poses a major problem for some Jewish people. However, as there is a wide range of religious practice by Jewish people, observance of the dietary laws will vary from patient to patient. Please ask how best to accommodate them and their normal practice. There are fasts or additional dietary stringencies during festivals or holy days and so it is important to ask how to best accommodate the patient.

Pagans ethically prefer foods derived from organic farming and free-range livestock rearing, as well as seasonal and local foods. Many are vegetarian or vegan.

Sikhs who have received the Amrit Ceremony (baptised) are vegetarians. They will exclude from their diet eggs, fish and any ingredients with animal derivatives or cooked in animal fat. Dairy produce is acceptable provided it is free from animal fat e.g., cheese made from non-animal rennet. It is essential to avoid contamination with meat at all stages of preparation, storage and serving. Some Sikhs will only eat food prepared by their own families. Non-vegetarian Sikhs will only eat meat that has been slaughtered according to their own rites (*jhatka*) and not halal (Muslim) or kosher (Jewish) rites. Sikhs do not fast.

Spiritualists have no dietary or fasting regulations.

APPENDICES

ON-LINE RESOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Baha'i: www.bahai.org (The official website of the Baha'i Faith)

Brahma Kumaris: www.BrahmaKumaris.com; www.brahmakumaris.uk

Buddhism: www.buddhisthealthcare.org.uk; www.zenbuddhisttemple.org;
www.buddhistpeacefellowship.org

Chinese Daoism: www.daoists.co.uk

Christian: A multitude of websites are available by denomination

Hinduism: www.hinduwebsite.com; www.hinduismtoday.org

Humanist: www.humanists.uk (Humanists in the UK website)

Islam: <https://mcb.org.uk/resources/british-muslims> (The Muslim Council of Britain);
www.isna.net (Islamic Society of North America website)

Jehovah's Witness: <https://www.jw.org/en/medical-library>; www.jw.org (Official website of the Jehovah's Witnesses)

Judaism: www.chabad.org; www.bbc.co.uk/religion/Judaism

Mormons: www.churchofjesuschrist.org

Pagans: www.Paganfederation.org; www.religionmediacentre.org.uk

Quakers: www.quaker.org.uk

Sikhism: www.sikhs.org

Spiritualism: www.snu.org.uk; www.arthurfindlaycollege.org.uk;
www.barbanellcentre.org.uk; www.snui.org.uk;
www.bbc.co.uk/religion/modernspiritualism

NHS Education for Scotland, *Multi-Faith Resource for Healthcare Staff, March 2007 Final Version*

Various articles on Wikipedia and BBC Religions

RECOMMENDED READING

Sourcebook of the World's Religions: An Interfaith Guide to Religion and Spirituality 3rd edition. Edited by Joel Beverluis. (New World Library, Nevada, CA 2000)

CONTRIBUTING FAITH AND BELIEF REPRESENTATIVES

who read and gave advice on final drafts:

Baha'i	Elizabeth Jenkerson
Brahma Kumaris	Sr. Linda Lee
Buddhist	Rev. Gareth Milliken
Chinese Ancient Traditions	Sarah Hill
Christian	Rev. Sarah Wehr, Rev. Dr. Vincent Perricone
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints	Bishop Richard Watts
Hindu	Manish Tayal, Kishor Patel
Humanist	Janet Powell
Islam	Syed Shuab Ahmed, Rizwan Hussain, Faheez Mohamed
Jehovah's Witnesses	Paul Chaplin, Terry Hind, Mark Oakes
Judaism	Danny Habel, Rabbi Mark Solomon
Paganism & New Age Spirituality	Chelsea Duke, Noelle Moline
The Religious Society of Friends	Joan Harrison, Sheila Peacock
Sikhism	Saranjit Karir
Spiritualism	Robert Baker, David Bruton



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