

## TRANSCRIPT Vignette 2 Obesity and Adolescence

## Narrator:

In caring for culturally diverse patients, physicians will often have access to an enormous amount of medical knowledge, but putting that knowledge to use requires the development of a relationship of trust based on the physician's understanding of a patient's psycho-social context. To gain that understanding, it is important to explore the patient's cultural identity, and it is just as important to understand that physicians have cultural identities too. As a physician, you should recognize that not only can your patient misunderstand because of cultural differences, but so can the physician.

In the next vignette, the physician immediately recognizes that her patient, an obese young African-American man, could be at risk for diabetes. Experts on diabetes are still puzzled as to why, but African-Americans are nearly twice as likely as Whites to develop diabetes, and obesity is a well-known risk factor.

Still, to know that a patient could fall into a particular category of risk is not the same as being able to care effectively for that patient. Proper care requires and communication, and for that an understanding of cultural identity is crucial.

See how in the process of establishing a relationship with her patient, the physician gradually comes to an understanding of the cultural factors that will enable her to care for him.

Resource: Excerpt from Quality Care for Diverse Populations, *Vignette 2—Obesity and Adolescence* video provided by the American Academy of Family Physicians.



Johnson: Good to see again, Rasheed. How are you?

Rasheed: I am all right...I guess.

Dr.

Johnson: Well, you sound a little down. What can I do for you today?

Rasheed: Well, it's my stupid school. They say I have to get a physical.

Dr.

Johnson: Oh, well, we can certainly take care of that. I'm just happy to hear

that you're not sick. Do you need the physical to play sports?

Narrator: The physician realizes that even in the best of times, it isn't easy to

be an adolescent; and for Rasheed, these are far from the best of times. As an adult woman, Dr. Johnson knows that she is not going to be the easiest person for a socially awkward young man to open up to. Therefore, she works to get the information she needs to help Rasheed. She begins with a slow, friendly tone discussing school and family, and then eases into medical issues.

Rasheed: No, it is not for any kind of sports. I think my teacher thinks there's

something wrong with me.

Dr.

Johnson: Why do you say that?

Rasheed: Well, I get tired easy...and sometimes I fall asleep in class...I don't

hang out much with the other kids. I just...I guess...I don't like

them or school very much.



Johnson: Well, Rasheed, what do you think? Is what your teacher says true?

Have you always felt this way about school and your classmates,

or is there something else going on?

Rasheed: Well, I do get tired easy and it is hard to breathe sometimes,

especially, like, when I go up the stairs or like...hard keeping up with the other kids when we play football and games after school. And because of this, they laugh at me and make jokes about me being fat. That's why I like to just stay at home and be with my

mom.

Dr.

Johnson: Well, do you think that jokes are the reason that you don't like

school and your classmates?

Rasheed: Well, probably

Dr.

Johnson: Well, sounds like we have a lot to talk about. But I tell you what.

Let's get you a physical first and then we'll talk more later, okay?

Rasheed: Okay.

Narrator: Dr. Johnson recognizes that culture is essential in the interview

process, diagnosis, and treatment of culturally diverse individuals. The evaluation of these individuals requires that these issues be

addressed to achieve accurate diagnosis and treatment.



Johnson: Good news, Rasheed, your physical came back normal. But there

are few things that we need to talk seriously about...I get the

feeling that you already know what I am about to say.

[Rasheed nods his head]

Dr.

Johnson: Rasheed, the reason that you feel tired and sleepy and

uninterested in your friends is probably related to your being overweight. We need to take a look at how to get your weight down...If you lose weight, you will have more energy and you'll

feel better about your school and your classmates.

Rasheed: I guess so. I know I am fat and I do wanna play with my friends,

but I don't know what to do. I don't have to go on one of those diets, do I? You know how much I love my mother's cooking?

Dr.

Johnson: Yes, I do. You forget, I've had your mother's cooking too. I don't

think we need to put you on a strict diet, but I do need to talk to your mom about what you eat, when you eat, and how much. The second thing we need to talk about is exercise. I know that you and your family are active in church—rather, the mosque, isn't it?

Rasheed: Yes, we all have a good time there.

Dr.

Johnson: Good, I'm glad. You may be able to use your activities there to get

together with people your own age and have fun; do something

that you enjoy.

Rasheed: What you're talking about sounds a lot like gym class and I hate

gym class, but I guess I can give it a try. But what am I supposed

to do about school?



Johnson: Well, is there anyone at school you can talk with? And what about

girls?

Rasheed: Well...not really...most of the kids there aren't really interested in

talking about anything except for sex, and as for the girls, well,

they are not too interested in me.

Dr.

Johnson: So tell me, Rasheed—and you know, you can tell me anything,

and no one else needs to know—how do you cope with the kids

teasing you and the lack of a good group of buddies?

Rasheed: Well, I spend a lot of time watching TV with my mom; sometimes I

think she thinks there is something wrong with me too.

Narrator: Many physicians in a scenario like this would simply place

Rasheed on a caloric restriction diet and would tell him to get some exercise. Dr. Johnson knows, however, that Rasheed has heard all of this before and it hasn't helped. So instead, using her understanding of cultural issues, Dr. Johnson takes an approach

that focuses on the factors that matter most to Rasheed.

Dr.

Johnson: Rasheed, I know you understand that until we get your weight

under control, you won't be enjoying your life as much as you ought to. Tell you what, let's bring your mom in and talk to her about eating habits that would be good for you, your entire family, and help you lose weight at the same time. I know that this is difficult, but being overweight puts you at risk for diabetes and other health problems. Here's what I am going to suggest,

Rasheed. In a moment, I'm going to bring your mom in so that we

can talk about your weight problem and your risk factors for diabetes. But don't worry— you can still have your mom's home

cooking.



Rasheed: Cool,'cause those diets are so nasty [sigh of relief]

Dr.

Johnson: And in the meantime, here's my prescription. I want to get involved

in activities at your school and at your mosque. Now, I don't mean anything like pumping iron or running a marathon; you will have to work up to that—but activities like flag football, those kinds of things. Anything to get you up and moving. And I think, once you start doing things with your friends, Rasheed, you will feel less

isolated and have more energy. How does that sound?

Rasheed: That sounds great. Thanks Dr. Johnson.

[Dr. Johnson nods her head]

Narrator: Communication, as always, is the key to a productive physician-

patient relationship, but very often, we don't even realize when cultural factors get in the way of communication. And if your patient doesn't share the intellectual and cultural background on which your recommendations are based, that patient is not going to do a very good job of cooperating with the treatment you

prescribe.

Remember our mnemonic, LEARN:

Listen

**E**xplain

**A**cknowledge

Recommend

**N**egotiate

And get into the habit of evaluating each patient's cultural identity factors, and you will go a long way toward accomplishing the goal

we all share: Quality care for diverse populations.