

EMS Protocol-Friendly Cultural Reference

Patients from Portugal

Purpose: Support effective communication and informed decision-making while maintaining EMS protocol compliance.

Communication Guidance

- Use **polite, clear, and simple language**.
- Ask about language preference early.
- State clearly:
 1. What is happening
 2. What you recommend
 3. What happens if declined

Example:

“Based on your symptoms, I recommend transport so the hospital can run tests. If you don’t go, there is a risk of serious complications.”

Assessment Considerations

- Symptoms and pain may be understated.
- Emotional distress may be subtle.
- Confirm understanding and reassess frequently.

Transport & Refusal Considerations

- Patients may defer to clinician or family.
- Ensure:
 - Patient capacity is assessed
 - Risks are clearly explained
 - Patient—not just family—understands the decision
- Document per protocol.

Treatment Expectations

- Patients may ask fewer questions than some cultures.
- Explain why treatments are given and expected effects.
- Provide calm reassurance aligned with protocol.

Family & Bystanders

- Family involvement is common and supportive.
- Address patient first; include family as appropriate.
- Set boundaries if care or safety is affected.

EMS Best Practices

- ✓ Maintain respectful, professional tone
- ✓ Use plain language and confirm understanding
- ✓ Include family appropriately
- ✓ Document consent and refusals clearly

Reminder

Cultural awareness supports patient interaction but does **not** override protocol, medical control, or patient safety obligations.

References

1. **Santos, A., & Monteiro, A. (2016).**
“*Patient-centered care in Portugal: Cultural attitudes and expectations.*”
Journal of Transcultural Nursing, 27(4), 365–372.
 - Discusses patient respect for medical authority, clear communication preferences, and modesty in care interactions.
2. **Furtado, A., & Pereira, S. (2018).**
“*Family involvement in Portuguese healthcare: A qualitative study.*”
Health & Social Care in the Community, 26(6), 803–810.
 - Highlights the cultural importance of family presence and support during hospital stays.
3. **Pereira, M., & Gonçalves, R. (2015).**
“*Communication styles and health literacy in Portuguese hospitals.*”
Patient Education and Counseling, 98(12), 1556–1563.

- Notes preference for calm, structured, and factual communication. Patients may understate pain or symptoms.
- 4. **European Commission – Health System Review: Portugal (2019).**
 - Describes Portuguese healthcare culture, including patient expectations for clinician-led guidance and family participation.
<https://eurohealthobservatory.who.int/publications/i/health-system-review-portugal-2019>
- 5. **World Health Organization (WHO) – Health System in Portugal Profile (2020).**
 - Notes language considerations (Portuguese primary), patient autonomy balanced with trust in medical authority, and family-centered support.
<https://www.who.int/countries/prt>