

ARE YOU USING THE PLATINUM RULE?

With the changing demographics of our patient populations, a different take on the old Golden Rule is gaining importance. The Platinum Rule, coined back in 1996 in a book by that same name, encourages us to treat others the way they want to be treated. It puts the focus on cultural awareness and assists us in delivering services to patients in the most appropriate way. I can't overemphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity — it makes all the difference in creating a positive patient experience, improving patients' oral health literacy, and increasing their access to care.

[Judy Kaye](#), JD, is a diversity trainer who consults extensively with public and private healthcare organizations on building cultural capacity. She explains, "We're hard-wired for 'unconscious bias' even though we are people of good will. We all hold stereotypes due to ignorance, misinformation, or lack of exposure to diverse cultures. As healthcare professionals, we have the capacity and responsibility to manage our biases when working with patients, and to accommodate patients' cultural beliefs and practices as much as possible."

Judy shared some of the initial steps providers can take to build cultural capacity:

- Create a friendly, welcoming, inclusive environment
- Ask what people want to be called, and note that in your file
- Inquire about patients' oral care beliefs and practices, conveying openness and respect
- Be positive in your feedback to patients
- Explore non-judgmentally why advice is rejected or not adhered to
- Always inquire about pain, since culture shapes how we express it
- Use trained interpreters for limited-English speakers, and document this in the dental record
- Address biased comments by staff

There are many resources available for providers interested in building cultural capacity in their practices, including:

- [Free on-line cultural competence program](#) for oral health providers from the Federal Office of Minority Health
- [Free patient education materials in English and Spanish](#) from the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research

Cultural sensitivity is a crucial component in the shift toward patient-centered oral health care and team-based delivery of care SKYGEN USA supports through innovative, technology-enabled solutions. For more information on building cultural capacity, please reach out to Judy Kaye at judy@judithkayeconsulting.com.