

• GUIDELINES FOR A •
MUSLIM FRIENDLY
HEALTH OUTREACH



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The following information are suggestions to help make your health expo friendly and welcoming to Muslim friends.



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AT THE PHYSICAL LOCATIONS

- **Entrance.** Print a large banner saying, Assalam Alaikum (Welcome/Peace be Upon You).

- **Contextualized health information/posters.** Avoid using posters in which women are wearing tight clothing, sleeveless and shorts. Modesty is much valued in Islam. There are large health expo posters in Arabic based on the eight laws of health, as well as a booklet in Arabic (and English) that describes Gods principles for healthy living contextualized for Muslims (To access the booklet, contact ReinertK@GC.adventist.org). It is ideal to have a table or booth where someone who speaks Arabic could talk to attendees and share health information. Avoid placing pictures of Jesus or large crosses in the area. Pictures and crosses can be seen as idolatrous (much like statues). You may want to have a few Bible verses with promises. In this case, if the verse is from the OT, write "Tawrat" followed by the book name, chapter and verse (e.g. Tawrat, Genesis X: Y); if from the Psalms write "Zaboor, Psalms 53:8"; if from the NT write, "Injil, John X: Y". Choose verses centered on God.

- **Prayer area.** Designate a clearly visible prayer area. Especially during illnesses, Muslims are encouraged to exercise patience and much prayer. Have a room that is empty, clean and with a carpet. This room is not only for Muslims, but for anyone who wants to pray. Because Muslims remove their shoes, have at the entrance a little area by the door for shoes. Contact a nearby local mosque and ask to speak with the Imam (Mosque spiritual leader). Explain that you are preparing for a health expo and would like to ask if they could donate a prayer rug for the prayer room and if there are any sensitivities you need to know when receiving Muslim neighbors. Keep the prayer rug in the prayer room only.



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CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES

- When possible, encourage volunteers to pray using a du'a posture (there is really nice brochure that is also online describing this posture. This could be sent to volunteers to make them aware). Instead of folding one's hands, one opens them up with the palms facing up to receive blessing. At the end, one simply rubs their hands over their own face.
- Physical contact across genders can be challenging for more conservative Muslims; thus, when possible assign a female to a female and a male to a male for massages, or screenings that require touch. If this is not possible, the female patient may ask to have a male relative (often husband) with her during the screening or procedure.
- Physical exposure of the body should be minimized. Uncover the body the least possible. In the case of men, modesty means that they should be covered from the navel to the knee.
- Communication with non-speakers is easier when professionals use short, simple sentences and simple words, such as "pain" rather than "discomfort." Avoiding medical jargon, idioms, and slang.
- Eye contact is also an issue during healthcare encounters. A female patient avoiding eye contact with a male health professional should not be misinterpreted as lack of trust or a sign of rejection. In some cases, a male will not look straight at the eyes of a female, but rather look down avoiding eye contact. This is not a sign of avoidance, but of respect, and modesty. The same is true with females towards a male.
- If your expo is during the sacred month of Ramadan (go online and check the dates), your Muslim neighbors may be fasting (food and liquids) so they will not try samples or even some avoid medication.



BRIDGES BETWEEN ADVENTISTS AND MUSLIMS

- Because of the notion of “prophetic medicine” which are health principles that go back to Prophet Mohammad's advice, most Muslims love the idea of natural remedies and treatments. Islamic prophetic medicine includes the use of dates, fig, pomegranate, capers, fenugreek, aloe, chicory, indigo, senna, dill, mustard, olive oil, honey, and various seeds. Water treatments are appreciated too.

- Prayer. Muslims love when others pray with them. They are often surprised to know that Christians pray. They assume Christians don't pray since most Christians are not very public about their prayer life. They love to hear that God is the healer. They health professionals only instruments in His hand, because healing ultimately comes from God alone.

- Muslims believe that God (Arabic term translated as Allah) is the God of Abraham, so there is never a sense that we are speaking about a different deity.

- When it comes to health, there is a worldview mismatch between Adventists or other Christians that could affect the Muslim perception of sickness. Sickness for us is an anomaly in God's perfect world, so we set ourselves to fight it for we believe this pleases God. Muslims in the other hand, see sickness as trial set by God to purify them from sin and to test their patience. So, they have an ambivalent approach to healing.

-If your expo is during the sacred month of Ramadan (go online and check the dates), your Muslim neighbors may be fasting (food and liquids) so they will not try samples or even some avoid medication. For more information contact:

GC Health Ministries at www.healthministries.com
GC Adventist Muslim Relations at
www.gcamr.globalmissioncenters.org



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