



ESME

East Sussex Medical Education

CULTURAL SUPPORT

Welcome to the Uk

Your Medical Education Team here at East Sussex Health Care Trust aim to increase the awareness of UK culture among doctors joining the NHS from overseas or doctors who may need some additional support where necessary with their written and spoken English language skills. We aim to create a social and professional support and learning network with emphasis on student led interactivity. With this in mind, our dedicated Cultural Support Facilitator, Debbie Langridge has put together some helpful information for you to refer to, being new to the UK and your new working environment.

Customs and Social Practices

When arriving in a different country it helps to be aware of some of the customs and social practices that control accepted polite behaviour known also as 'Good Manners' or 'Etiquette'. This country's proper title is 'The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland'. It is a sovereign state that consists of four countries: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Its people are British.

Greetings in the UK

The handshake is the most common form of greeting and is customary when you are introduced to somebody new (or if you have to introduce yourself to somebody). Always use your right hand to shake the other person's right hand. Do not offer a limp hand and check that your palms are not sweaty or clammy before shaking hands. Remember to make eye contact but not to stare.

'Hello, my name is.....'

Within the Hospital Trust the 'Hello my name is' initiative has been adopted as a greeting between staff and patients. In this instance you could offer your right hand and say 'Hello my name is' followed by what you would like the patient to call you. Having told them what you would like to be known as, you would say 'What would you like me to call you?'



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This will avoid any difficulties with name formalities that could arise and hopefully save time. When being introduced to a colleague or senior colleague by someone else listen to the person's name and title carefully and simply say 'How do you do.' They may say this back. You don't need to say anything else. It isn't really a question, just a greeting. If they offer their hand for you to shake, do so. It would be bad manners not to. Always look at the person you are speaking to.

Goodbye

Whenever possible try to use a personalised parting. For example 'Goodbye Mr Smith'.

Speaking in English

When English is not your first language it is important to speak clearly and slowly so that you are understood easily. All languages have their own rhythm and it is easy to make the mistake of speaking English in the rhythm of your first language. This will make your accent more pronounced and you more difficult to understand. Listen to others speaking, even on the television, just so long as they are speaking in Standard English. Please do not be tempted to use your own language with a colleague in front of a patient, it is considered bad manners.

Medical Terminology

When wishing to examine a patient in a more 'personal' area of their body one would say 'May I examine your.....' or 'I need to examine your.....' You would then use the accepted medical terminology. Colloquial terms are not usually used. If in doubt ask your supervisor. It might be best to ask for advice in this, if the patient is a child.

Out and about in public places

The British like to queue! Standing in line and taking one's turn is a great British custom. In the supermarket, waiting to buy a ticket, at the railway station, in any busy shop, just about anywhere really. If you try to make your way to the front, you will be reprimanded! Equally if you fail to move along with everyone else and leave too large a gap. Happy Queuing!

Holding doors open

Both genders should hold doors open for others, always check for others coming through behind you. Say 'Thank you' when someone holds a door open for you.



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Seats on public transport

If there are not enough seats for everyone it is usual to offer your seat to someone who might need it more than you: the elderly, pregnant women, the disabled or anyone impeded in some way.

Asking for something

In a shop, cafe, restaurant or anywhere else, if we want something we say 'May I have....' or 'Could I have.....' followed by 'Please'. When we receive the thing we have asked for we say 'Thank you'. We say 'Thank you' a great deal!

On the telephone we say 'May I speak with (or to)..... please' or 'Could I speak with (or to).....please'. If the person who answers the phone says 'I'll find them for you', say 'Thank you'.

Excuse Me

If you wish to pass by someone, for example in the supermarket aisle or a crowded place, and you need them to move aside you would say 'Excuse me please'. Don't forget to say 'Thank you' when they allow you to pass.

Please Don't

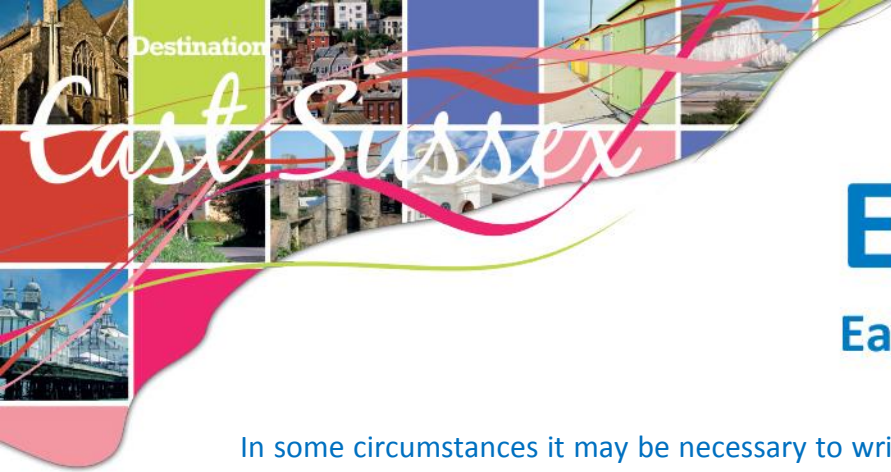
Please don't belch in public. If you can't help it try to do it quietly covering your mouth with your hand, say 'Excuse me'. If you should yawn cover your mouth in the same way. Always cover your mouth with your hand or a clean handkerchief if you cough. We simply do not pass wind in public! If it should happen we will pretend it didn't! Should your nose require attention ideally it should be dealt with in private. If this is not possible you may blow it gently with a very clean handkerchief or tissue. Sneezing should be done into your handkerchief if possible. The phrase 'Pardon me' is not used.

Saying Sorry

If you should accidentally bump into someone say 'Sorry'. They will usually say 'Sorry' to you. I don't know why we do this! We do it even if it was the other person's fault.

The Apology

If it should become necessary to apologise for your actions always do it as soon as possible after the event. Immediately is best. Keep it short and simple and admit your error. Don't be effusive. For example 'I'm sorry for being late' is appropriate. 'I'm very, very sorry for being late' is too much. It is unnecessary to apologise for someone else. That is a matter for them. It is inappropriate to apologise and then blame another person. For example 'I'm sorry that you are upset but it was John's fault that this happened'. If you are offered an apology always accept it graciously.



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In some circumstances it may be necessary to write a letter of apology although the best way is always at the time and in person.

Any letter of apology should be brief and to the point as well.

Women in the UK

Women are entitled to equal respect and status as men both at work and in daily life. It is perfectly acceptable for a woman to invite a man (or woman) to accompany her for a meal or a drink or to a social event. Coffee or lunch, are the most popular. This should be considered as a gesture of friendship or as a colleague and nothing more. Expect to pay for your own food/drink however if someone offers to pay for you accept graciously and offer to pay next time. This applies to either sex or any combination.

Handwriting

Doctors are famous for their terrible hand writing. In the UK it is considered to be a topic for much amusement, kindly meant. All languages when written have a specific script style. This should be borne in mind when hand writing in English. Please try to write as clearly as possible with thought for the person who will have to read it. You may be writing important notes concerning a patient, their care or their medication.

Most Important of All

Most important of all is that you enjoy being in the UK and gain pleasure from discovering its culture, making new friends and building new professional relationships.

A Little Note About Names and Titles

In general when meeting someone new it is usual to address them by their title followed by their last name until specifically invited to use their first name. The last name of a person may also be termed the 'surname' which means their family name. The first name is their given name. It may be known as their 'Christian' name although it may not be linked to their religious beliefs. It is usual to have more than one given name. Most people choose to be known by the first of these or a shortened version of it. This is when the question 'What would you like me to call you?' becomes very useful. You would then know their 'preferred name' which you will see in the patient name details above the hospital beds. If you wish to call someone by their first name when invited, you should expect them to call you by yours, in reality they may just call you 'Doctor'.



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Titles used in the UK

- Mr. Pronounced Mister. An adult man
- Master a boy or young man, not often used
- Mrs. Pronounced Missus, a married woman
- Miss an unmarried woman
- Ms. Pronounced 'Miz, a woman who does not wish to be identified by her marital status

Some professional women choose to use the title Miss irrespective of their marital status. In short the title a woman chooses is no indication of marital status, the above are traditional usages. The title is used in front of the family name for example Mr. Brown.

Apart from these there are many other titles that prefix peoples names. These indicate status, that the person is a member of the clergy, a military officer, a member of the aristocracy or a doctor to mention a few. The possibilities are many, as are the appropriate forms of address. The paragraph below will tell you how to cope with this and still appear polite and respectful.

Other Titles

These are the most confusing!

The moment may arise when you look at your patient list and see an unfamiliar title. What should you do? Just a small change to the usual format will serve you well!

'Hello my name is Dr, what may I call you?'

When you find out how they like to be addressed, if it is possible, write it down somewhere (possibly in the notes?). It may be useful to your colleagues.

If the person asks you to use their first name (this is doubtful) then you should allow them to use yours by saying 'Please call me'.

Please contact Debbie Langridge – Cultural Support Facilitator directly at langridge561@btinternet.com for further information

We hope you find this information helpful and would encourage you to look to attend the Cultural Support Workshops or to contact christina.morphew@nhs.net to arrange a tailored 1:1 meeting dependant on your requirements if required. Dates for the workshops can be found on our medical education website or please contact allison.duggan@nhs.net and confirm your intention to attend