Ramadan Revealed:
A Community-Based Perspective on Ramadan
Contributors

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Disclosure Statement

- BD Helping Building Healthy Communities Award supported our work.
- We appreciate the opportunity to be a part of their vision of expanding access and improving care for underserved populations in the U.S.
Thank You to Our Partners

- University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
  - Community-University Health Care Center
  - Center for Health Interprofessional Programs
  - Walter Library: Media Services
- Becton, Dickinson and Company (BD) Education Center
- Direct Relief, Non-profit Organization
- National Association of Community Health Centers
- Mixed Blood Theater
Learning Objectives

▪ Understand the importance of Ramadan to those who observe and their families
▪ Describe common misconceptions surrounding Ramadan
▪ Reflect on how community narratives can help shape medical education
## Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Estimated Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Survey</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>10-20 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning Module</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questions/ Wrap-Up</td>
<td>5 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Survey</td>
<td>5-10 min (After Webinar)</td>
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What is Ramadan?
Background: What is Ramadan?

• 9th month of the lunar calendar, exact start date varies each year depending on sighting of the new crescent moon

• During the day, Muslims who can fast abstain from food and drink

• Time of family reunion and connectedness

• Families engage in night prayers in the mosque

• Giving to charity is encouraged during this time

• Different cultures have different traditions, but generosity and worship is centered on throughout the holy month

Background: Ramadan and Islam

• **5 pillars of Islam**: Core beliefs and duties for all Muslims
  • Profession of faith, Prayer, Alms, **Fasting during Ramadan**, Pilgrimage

• By abstaining from certain distractions and negativities, Muslims seek richer perception of God (Allah)

• Renew awareness and gratitude for God’s grace upon them

• Form deeper understanding of the Qur’an (holy book) which was first revealed during this month

• It serves as a reminder of their religious duty to help those in need

https://www.metmuseum.org/learn/educators/curriculum-resources/art-of-the-islamic-world/unit-one/the-five-pillars-of-islam
https://www.saudiembassy.net/five-pillars-islam
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Important Terms</strong></th>
<th><strong>Suhoor</strong></th>
<th><strong>Iftar</strong></th>
<th><strong>Eid al-Fitr</strong></th>
<th><strong>Din</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suhoor</strong></td>
<td>The morning meal eaten by Muslims before sunrise</td>
<td>The evening meal eaten by Muslims after sunset during Ramadan.</td>
<td>Eid means “festival” or “feast” in Arabic. This celebration marks the end of Ramadan. People greet each other with “Eid Mubarak,” meaning “Blessed Eid.” Food is prepared &amp; gifts are distributed to those in need and family. Forgiveness is encouraged.</td>
<td>One’s religion or religious duty to God, themselves, and their traditions.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Iftar</strong></td>
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Monthly Overview of Ramadan

Ramadan begins with the sighting of the new moon in countries that are able to see it. Typically the first day is one of the more difficult ones since it takes time to adjust to fasting.

The last 10 days of Ramadan are some of the more sacred days of the month. It is said that the Night of Decree falls on one of the last ten days of the month and on that day the Quran was revealed. Usually during this time people increase additional prayers.

After the first two weeks, people are typically more adjusted to fasting and it is much easier to fast. Most people have adapted to a schedule of reading more Quran, listening to lectures or just spending more time with family.

Eid al-Fitr! After Ramadan ends and the new moon is sighted signalling the new month, the Eid festival begins which is three days of celebration and fun for Muslims.
A Day in Ramadan

Suhoor: The predawn meal that Muslims eat before the morning prayer before they begin their fast.

Days usually vary for everyone, but many spend more time reading more religious scripts, like the Quran, listening or attending lectures, and spending more time with family.

Most people don’t experience any drastic changes in their usual schedule. Many will still go to work or school, etc. One change is that some people will try to make it to the mosque for the 5 daily prayers if they can.

Iftar: The meal where Muslims break their fast. Typically this meal is at sunset after the dusk prayer.
What are some of the common misconceptions surrounding Ramadan?
### Common Misconceptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth</th>
<th>Reality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Muslims fast even when they are sick</td>
<td>• Not all Muslims are fasting during Ramadan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ramadan means Muslims are only fasting from food and drink</td>
<td>• Ramadan is more than just fasting from food and water</td>
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<tr>
<td>• There is no reason someone would voluntarily fast for a whole day</td>
<td>• Ramadan carries great spiritual importance</td>
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1. Not all Muslims are fasting during Ramadan

- Most scholars agree that elderly, pregnant, nursing or menstruating, people, ill people, and travelers are exempted from fasting.
- If a Muslim is not fasting, it does not necessarily mean they do not want to.

2. Ramadan is more than just fasting from food and water

- Ramadan also involves fasting from negative thoughts and actions including sexual activities and cursing.

3. Ramadan carries great spiritual importance

- Although understanding poverty may be part of the reason people fast, fasting was ordained on Muslims to help them achieve greater “Taqwa” or God-consciousness.
- By avoiding basic necessities, Muslims are able to concentrate on worship and gratitude.
What do those who observe gain from Ramadan?
3 **Spiritual Growth.** By praying more, reading the Quran more, and minimizing negative thinking, Ramadan encourages consciousness and worship of Allah (taqwa).

2 **Community Development.** When Muslims fast as a community during Ramadan, it allows people to get closer to one another and closer to God together.

1 **Individual Improvement.** During Ramadan, Muslims work on improving themselves by praying, reading, and donating more. Fasting teaches control, sympathy, empathy and sincerity.
How can healthcare team members work with patients during Ramadan?
Fasting and Health: An Islamic Perspective

“Oh you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that you may learn piety and righteousness.”

-Quran [2:183]

- Fasting for Muslims is an act of morality and conventional reverence
- Perseverance and self-control allows for constant spiritual growth
- The Quran “prescribes” and states that fasting is essential for spiritual health

http://www.hizb.org.uk/islamic-culture/ayan-reflection-fasting-has-been-prescribed-for-you-%D9%83%D9%8F%D8%AA%D9%90%D8%A8%D9%8E-%D8%B9%D9%8E%D9%84%D9%8E%D9%8A%D9%92%D9%83%D9%8F%D9%85%D9%8F-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%90%D9%91/
A Healthcare Team Member’s Role

Listening

Understanding

Asking Questions
Narrative Medicine

“[Narrative medicine] is a commitment to understanding patients’ lives, caring for the caregivers, and giving voice to the suffering.”

Rita Charon, MD, PhD
Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons
Methods

- Used a feedback and community-based approach
- Our surveys influenced the questions asked to interviewees
- It was a parallel process where surveys and interviews were conducted simultaneously
- Community members were involved in the process
Ramadan Revealed

Our Team

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• Nadira Mohammed

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• EmmaLee Pallai
• Chloe Goodman
• Susanna Carlos