

Cultural adaptation of healthcare interventions: Reducing inequities with a step-by-step guide

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Introduction

Healthcare interventions are frequently implemented across diverse populations without meaningful cultural adaptation.

Although cultural adaptation is widely recommended:

Adaptation
processes are
rarely described
transparently

Deep structural
assumptions
remain
unexamined

Changes often
stop at
translation

Why is this a problem?

Reduced effectiveness

Inequitable outcomes

Poor acceptability

Aim¹

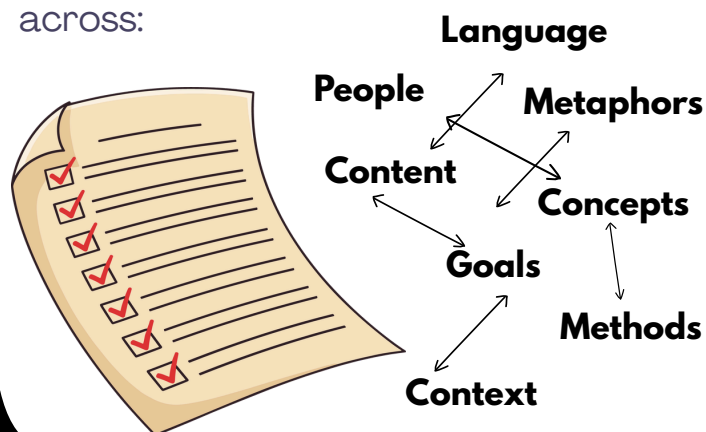
To develop a transparent, transferable, step-by-step guide for culturally adapting healthcare interventions.

How?

Illustrated through our adaptation of the 'I Manage My Meds' toolkit for older adults from a South Asian background in the UK.

Ecological Validity Model

Adaptations were systematically mapped across:



DON'T FORGET!

Cultural Adaptation
is cyclical - not
linear

Case Study

A co-designed toolkit supporting older adults living with frailty to manage multiple medicines at home.

**I Manage
My Meds**



Why Adapt?

Older adults from a South Asian background in the UK experience:

- Higher rates of multimorbidity
- Language and literacy barriers
- Underrepresentation in intervention design

Deep vs. Surface

Surface Adaptations

Translation of materials into Urdu
Video dubbing
Inclusive imagery

BUT These improved accessibility but did not alter core assumptions.

Deep Structural Adaptations

Our stakeholders helped identify
Cultural norms
Caregiving norms
Communication norms

Establish a
collaborative
adaptation
group

Conduct formal
wider testing

Iterate and
refine further

Test with the
target
population

**The 8-Step
Cultural
Adaptation
Guide**

Refine using
the adaptation
framework

Develop a pilot
adapted
version

Conduct a
structured
review of the
intervention

Select and
operationalise
an adaptation
framework

Why this matters for quality and safety

Culturally adapted interventions improve:

- Acceptability
- Engagement
- Equity of access
- Implementation fidelity

Key Findings

Cultural adaptation extends beyond translation.

Deep adaptations often require reframing intervention logic.

Stakeholder collaboration must occur throughout.

Adaptation processes should be documented transparently.

Iteration is essential for fidelity and relevance.

Conclusion

This study provides a practical, transferable eight-step guide for cultural adaptation in healthcare.

By moving beyond surface modification and embedding structured, iterative collaboration, healthcare interventions can become:

More equitable More acceptable
More reproducible Safer

Cultural adaptation should be embedded within quality improvement