According to the National Council of Churches, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has the second fastest growing congregation in the United States (LDS News 2015). More than 15 million members exist worldwide, and approximately 6.5 million reside in the United States (LDS News 2015).

In 1830, it is believed that a man by the name of Joseph Smith received a vision from God to create a new Christian denomination that was true to the gospel (PBS Mormons 2007). Having had concerns about the variation of beliefs and practices between Christian groups, James Smith founded the Latter-day Saints congregation in upstate New York to fulfill his vision.

To escape persecution, the Church migrated west in the mid-1840s, and today, the LDS Church’s headquarters is Utah, where Mormons make up about two-thirds (65%) of the state’s population (LDS News; Pew Mormon 2009).

In order to provide culturally competent care for this growing religious group, it is important that care providers become familiar with the beliefs and practices particular to Mormon patients. Here, we provide some highlights from new Mormon/Latter-day Saints group on CultureVision. For full citations and much more information, visit the resource at www.culturevision.com.

RELATIONSHIP TO BIOMEDICINE

Mormon doctrine indicates science as having its source in God, and as such, most Mormons are willing to seek and use medical officials as their primary consultant for medical dilemmas rather than ecclesiastical officials (Abbott 2002).

While in general Mormon individuals are likely to be open to biomedical treatment, a treatment plan that combines Western medicine with spiritual remedies that honor their faith may be considered as well. For example, in times of sickness, some Mormon patients may request members of the priesthood to anoint them with consecrated oil and pray for their recovery (Oaks 2010; WAHT nd).

CONCEPT OF HEALTH

The concept of health in the Mormon community is based in the Word of Wisdom (Mormon Beliefs 2015), a doctrine that was given to Joseph Smith through spiritual revelation (Mormon.org 2015).

The Word of Wisdom prohibits consumption of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and hot drinks (coffee and tea), and encourages consumption of herbs, fruits, grains, and meat (sparingly). It is believed that following this code provides blessings, while disobedience results in temporal and spiritual consequences.
On June 26, 2015, in their ruling on landmark case Obergefell v. Hodges, the United States Supreme Court ruled that same-sex marriage is protected under the 14th Amendment (SCOTUS 2015). This decision makes same-sex marriage a constitutional right in all states, nullifying previous state laws prohibiting marital unions between gay and lesbian couples. The Supreme Court’s decision affirms that married same-sex couples will receive all of the same benefits and rights afforded to heterosexual couples, and furthermore requires all states recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states.

While the last few years have brought major shifts in public perception around same-sex marriage and LGBT equality in general, the legal shift in marriage does not signify complete social acceptance of same-sex unions or LGBT individuals. Opponents of marriage equality argue that marriage is solely the union between one man and one woman, and therefore the union between two men or two women should not be called a marriage. The 5-4 split between the justices on the Supreme Court decision affirms this cultural division. Even married same-sex couples may experience a lack of acceptance from family and community and the negative effects of social stigma.

What this ruling does guarantee is an expansion and confirmation of equal rights for LGBT couples in healthcare. Here are three ways this may impact your healthcare organization (HRC 2015):

1. **Decision-Making** – In the absence of an Advanced Healthcare Directive, spouses are automatically appointed as a surrogate if a patient is incapacitated and unable to communicate their medical wishes. Same-sex spouses will now be equitably treated in this regard.
2. **Visitation** – While hospitals were already federally required to allow patients to choose who gets to visit them, marriage equality will make it easier for married LGBT patients to declare these visitation rights, especially in hospital facilities that narrowly define “family.”
3. **Insurance** – Same-sex spouses continue to have the ability to enroll in family or spousal insurance through plans offered in the ACA Marketplace or by their employer.

"Marriage ... allows two people to find a life that could not be found alone, for a marriage becomes greater than just the two persons. Rising from the most basic human needs, marriage is essential to our most profound hopes and aspirations."

- Justice Kennedy, in the majority opinion of Obergefell v. Hodges

For more information, stop by your Ivy Tech Bloomington Library in Room D123 at the Main Campus or call 812-330-6080.

Email us at: <bl-library@lists.ivytech.edu>.