In health care, management requires an in-depth understanding of workforce regulatory laws, cultural sensitivity and diversity, flexibility, and strong leadership. An organizational paradigm shift has driven organizational change from the traditional workplace, with standard hours and expected retirement benefits, to a flexible, regulated, diverse work environment that must constantly adapt to environmental conditions. To find professionals who will work nontraditional shifts within a shrinking workforce, human resource (HR) departments must look outside of the traditional workforce. The influx of foreign-trained health care providers—nurses and physicians, in particular—is changing the workforce dynamics.

For example, within the last 10 years, the trend in dental schools has shifted from the majority of male graduates to an almost even mix of female and male graduates. Although the number of minorities entering the health care workforce is not fully representative of the population served, the numbers are increasing. Many educational institutions and organizations have initiated affirmative action to focus on the number of minorities entering health care programs. Affirmative action considers factors such as race, color, religion, and gender when selecting candidates. However, it is not sufficient to simply help minorities get started with educational training. As an HR manager, you must foster a recognition and appreciation of the meaningful differences in employees. You can do this by bringing in a speaker to talk about cultural diversity or by celebrating cultural activities and encouraging employees to wear native costumes and bring traditional food. As the HR manager, you must always be cognizant of employment laws like the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

As the HR manager, you must help employees confront their underlying beliefs, assumptions, and prejudices within an organization. You must be prepared to provide training to employees to assist them in understanding the technical and the social role they play in the organization. It is essential to maintain harmony among the staff and the employees of an organization. It is equally important that the ultimate customers of the organization—the patients—are also satisfied with care they receive. One way to learn the values and norms that contribute to a culture is through organization socialization. HR managers play a significant role in socialization by assigning mentors, providing workplace training (e.g., ethics, sexual harassment, and diversity), setting clear workplace rules and regulations, and sharing organizational values and beliefs. This helps employees to be prepared to participate as members of the organization. If you have a new employee from a foreign country, try to find someone in your organization who speaks that employee's native language and is aware of his or her customs. If no one can be found, select a mentor who is willing to research the culture of the new employee prior to arrival. Although no
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one can be expected to be an expert on the customs of the new employee, the new employee will appreciate the effort and feel welcomed. Organization socialization can be associated with reward systems and performance evaluation to spur participation. Cultural perceptions and biases are difficult to change, but change is possible. Employees who believe that their organization has rigorous socialization and support programs take pride in their work, are more likely to stay at their jobs, and are more committed to the success of the organization.

The health care workforce should be culturally competent and able to manage people of different cultures with sensitivity and respect. HR professionals must monitor the cultural awareness and competence of prospective employees. Cultural competence begins in the interview process. Interviewers should be able to differentiate between skills, attitudes, and culturally biased behaviors. One approach to cultural competence is assimilation, or bringing all cultures together into one harmonious culture. Organizations that adopt this approach expect individuals to suppress their differences and accommodate the homogenous ideal.