



Caring for the Zoroastrian Patient

Founded by the Iranian - speaking prophet, Zarathustra, (Greek Zoroastra), Zoroastrianism flourished in eastern Iran, circa 1000BC.

There are at present some 150,000 adherents.

SIGNIFICANT TERMS

AVESTA - Collection of the holy texts of Zoroastrianism. Most texts are accompanied by **ZAND** - interpretation. **YASNA** - The main rite of worship. **SADRA** (sacred shirt) and **KUSTI** (sacred girdle) are the main symbols of initiation into the faith. Children are initiated into the faith between the ages of 7 and 15. These garments are to be worn at all times, and treated with the greatest respect.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

HYGIENE - The Zoroastrian has a very strict standard of hygiene and running water would be preferred for washing. A bowl of freshly drawn water would be acceptable.

DIET - There are no general dietary restrictions. However, some patients may not eat pork or other forms of meat, and some may prefer a vegetarian diet in Hospital.

BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS - It is unlikely that Zoroastrians would be willing to receive or to donate blood.

ORGAN DONATION / TRANSPLANT - Orthodox Zoroastrians consider that the pollution of the body is against the will of God. They are opposed to transplants for this reason, and may therefore also be opposed to organ donation. However, those who are less orthodox may agree.

PRAYER

Daily prayers are essential to the faith, and as much privacy should be provided as possible. The **kusti** or sacred girdle is tied and untied during the prayers, and very sick patients may be grateful for help in doing this.

AS DEATH APPROACHES

If the patient has no close family or friends who can be with them it would be helpful if a fellow Zoroastrian could be contacted if at all possible.

LAST OFFICES

It is important that the body is bathed before being dressed in white clothing. Most families will provide a special **sadra** which is to be worn next to the skin with the sacred **kusti**. The family may wish the head to be covered with a cap or scarf. Post-mortems are forbidden by religious law, only a Coroner's legal requirement would allow this to take place. Delays to a funeral will cause distress, and any reason for this must be carefully explained to the family. Cremation and burial are both acceptable, and although some families may wish to prepare the body for the funeral, in most cases a Funeral Director will be instructed.

EVERY ZOROASTRIAN PATIENT IS AN INDIVIDUAL AND PRACTICE MAY VARY