

# A Two-Step Training Program for Utilizing Interpreters During Patient Interactions: Advancing Student Pharmacists Communication Skills

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## Introduction

- More than 350 languages are spoken in the United States (US) and 10 million residents are deaf or hard of hearing.<sup>1</sup>
- The CDC states 8.3% of the population speaks English less than very well or not at all.<sup>2</sup>
- A language barrier can negatively impact patient care including clinical health outcomes, patient safety, patient satisfaction and provider satisfaction.<sup>3,4</sup>
- Literature has shown that health care professionals are more prone to utilize interpreters if they are trained on how to use them.<sup>5</sup>
- To our knowledge, there is no formalized training program in the US to prepare student pharmacists to utilize interpreters during patient encounters.

## Objectives

To develop and evaluate the effectiveness of a two-step training pilot program in the Doctorate of Pharmacy curriculum to prepare students to utilize medical language interpreters during patient interactions

## Methods

- Pilot known as the Advanced Communications and Counseling Skills course
- Step One: Completion of four asynchronous virtual modules accompanied by knowledge check points
  - Module 1: Course Introduction; Patient-Pharmacists scenario with and without using an interpreter for a patient who speaks a language other than English; Explanation of repercussions if an interpreter was not utilized
  - Module 2: Panel discussion of various healthcare professionals
  - Module 3: Patient and caregiver interview discussing their patient care experience with and without an interpreter
  - Module 4: Dos and Don'ts' when working with an interpreter

## Outcomes Assessed

- Patient satisfaction of P2 communication skills
  - Likert scale; communication and ability to use interpreter
- P2 student satisfaction with pilot program
  - Likert scale; online training modules, relevance to pharmacy practice, and feeling prepared
  - Open ended feedback

Step One

• Module 1-4



Step Two

• OSCE +  
Refugee  
Center  
Health  
Fair

## Analysis

- Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics v.28 and vassarstats.net
- Descriptive statistics used to summarize demographics and outcome variables
- Likert scale dichotomized based on distribution (as shown in the data tables)
- Pre and post assessments were not matched at an individual level; thus, parametric sample level comparisons were performed.
- Dichotomized variables (pre- and post- assessments) compared using fisher's exact test.
- Open-ended qualitative data and related survey comments are reported in full.

## Conclusion

The training program was developed and embedding this course in the pharmacy curriculum could increase student confidence and have a positive impact on patient communication experience.

## References

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Table 1. P2 Demographics and Baseline

Total number of P2 students	N(%) N = 23
Age: 18-24 years of age	18 (78.3)
25 and older	5 (21.7)
Sex: Females	19 (82.6)
Race: Caucasian	17 (73.9)
Black	2 (8.7)
Asian	2 (8.7)
Other	2 (8.7)
Ethnicity: Hispanic	2 (8.7)
Non-Hispanic	21 (91.3)
How many languages do you speak other than English?	
None	16 (69.6)
1 or more	5 (21.7)
Did not answer	5 (8.7)
Is English your first language?	
Yes	18 (78.3)
No	5 (21.7)
Ever Interpreted conversation for others (personally or professionally)?	
Yes	17 (73.9)
No	6 (26.1)
Years have you been around a pharmacy setting; mean (SD)	2.8 (1.4)
Primary location of pharmacy setting; mean (SD)	
Community/retail	11 (47.8)
Ambulatory care setting	0 (0.0)
Acute care setting	0 (0.0)
Hospital setting	10 (43.5)
Other (including not working in a pharmacy)	2 (8.6)
How often have you utilized language interpreter services during patient interactions?	
I do not work with patients	3 (13.0)
Never	6 (26.1)
Rarely	9 (39.1)
Sometimes	2 (8.7)
Often	3 (13.0)
Very often/Routinely	0 (0.0)
If utilized interpreting services, what type of format /resource did you engage in?	
Live person	8 (34.8)
Audio telephone	3 (13.0)
iPad video	4 (17.4)
Facetime Smartphone	0 (0.0)
No Response	8 (34.8)

## Results

Table 2: P2 report of comfort, confidence, and impact using interpreter services	Pre N(%) N=23	Post N(%) N=18	P-Value
I am willing to use language interpreters during a patient interaction Strongly agree Did not strongly agree	18 (78.3) 5 (21.7)	13 (72.2) 4 (27.8)	>0.999
I feel comfortable using language interpreters during a patient interaction Agreed (SA or A) Did not agree (Neither, D, SD)	11 (47.8) 12 (52.1)	14 (77.8) 4 (22.2)	0.06
I am confident in my abilities to use a language interpreter during a patient interaction Agreed (SA or A) Did not agree (Neither, D, SD)	9 (39.1) 14 (60.8)	15 (83.3) 3 (16.7)	0.009
Using language interpreters during patient interactions help improve patient health outcomes Strongly agree Did not strongly agree	19 (82.6) 4 (17.3)	17 (94.4) 1 (5.6)	0.36
Using language interpreters during patient interactions improve provider-patient communication Strongly agree Did not strongly agree	21 (91.3) 2 (8.7)	18 (100.0) 0 (0.0)	0.50

Table 3: P2 Satisfaction With Pilot Program	N(%)
Satisfied with reviewing the online communication training modules Agreed (SA or A) Did not agree (Neither, D, SD)	18 (100.0) 0 (0.0)
Training module is relevant to pharmacy practice Agreed (SA or A) Did not agree (Neither, D, SD)	18 (100.0) 0 (0.0)
I was prepared to utilize an interpreter to enhance my patient encounter during the health clinic after reviewing the communication training modules Agreed (SA or A) Did not agree (Neither, D, SD)	17 (94.4) 1 (5.6)

Table 4: Patient Satisfaction of P2 Communication Skills During Health Fair	
How satisfied were you with the communication from your student pharmacist during your encounter? Very Satisfied Satisfied Not Satisfied (Neutral, Dissatisfied, Very Dissatisfied)	N=23 20 (87.0) 3 (13.0) 0 (0.0)
How satisfied were you with the student pharmacist's ability to utilize an interpreter during your encounter? (6 responses not collected for this question due to patient declining use of a language interpreter) Very Satisfied Satisfied Not Satisfied (Neutral, Dissatisfied, Very Dissatisfied)	N=17 13 (76.5) 4 (23.5) 0 (0.0)

## Contact and Disclosure

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Nothing to disclose for all authors