



Language Access in the Emergency Department – The Patient’s Perspective



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Background

- Of the 61.6 million immigrants identified on the 2013 U.S. Census, 41% are considered Limited English Proficient (LEP). Despite legal mandates defining appropriate interpreter services, LEP patients report a high degree of miscommunication during their medical encounters. There is a large body of literature describing the health harms that result, including incorrect diagnoses, over-testing, and medication errors. The objective of this study was to assess ED patient knowledge of language access laws in a setting where most patients have limited English proficiency.

Methods

- Study Design:** Anonymous survey
- Setting:** A public emergency department, Olive-View UCLA
- Subjects:** A convenience sample of English and Non-English speaking patients being discharged from the ED
- Measures and Outcomes:** Age, ethnicity, language preferences, frequency and type of interpreter use. Patients were also asked about their knowledge of language laws and perceived barriers to using interpreter services
- Analysis:** Descriptive statistics

Language Access in the Emergency Department: The Patient's Perspective
Data Collection Form – ENGLISH-SPEAKING PATIENTS

ED Date: _____

1. Triage level: _____ (1-5)

2. Crowding level at the time of the ED visit (NEDOCS score): _____ (1-6)

3. Approximate time spent during ED visit: _____ (in minutes)

4. Medical record number (for reference, to be entered after completion of form): _____

Part I. Data Collection

1. What language do you prefer to receive your medical care in?
 English Spanish (if Spanish please switch over to Spanish data collection form)

2. At the beginning of your ED visit, were you asked if you would like an interpreter?
 Yes No

3. Did you know the law in the United States gives you the right to an interpreter when you visit a clinic or hospital?
 Yes No
 a. If yes, did you know that interpretation services are free of charge?
 Yes No Not applicable

4. Were you informed of your right to an interpreter during your visit today?
 Yes No
 a. If yes, were you informed that interpretation services are free of charge?
 Yes No Not applicable

5. Discharge instructions:
 a. First, can you tell us your discharge diagnosis?
 Yes No I don't know Prefer not to say
 b. Were you given any new prescriptions on this visit?
 Yes No I don't know
 c. Are you supposed to follow up with another doctor or clinic after this visit?
 Yes No I don't know
 If yes, please name the doctor or clinic where you are supposed to follow up: _____

6. Baseline demographics:
 a. How many years of education did you complete? _____ (number in years)
 b. How confident do you feel in filling out medical forms by yourself?
 Not at all confident
 Slightly confident
 Somewhat confident
 Fairly confident
 Completely confident

Part II. Medical Record Review

1. Patient's age: _____

2. Patient's Race/Ethnicity: _____

3. Patient's reported preferred language?
 English
 Spanish
 Other: _____

4. Type of primary provider in the ED (the provider who wrote the note):
 Medical Student
 Resident
 Nurse Practitioner
 Attending
 Other: _____

5. Did the patient correctly identify their discharge diagnosis?
 Yes No Not applicable

6. Did the patient correctly identify their prescription medication(s) to fill?
 Yes No Not applicable

7. Did the patient correctly identify their follow up plan?
 Yes No Not applicable

8. Total correct discharge instruction questions: _____ (0-8)

Patient Data Collection Form – English

Language Access in the Emergency Department: The Patient's Perspective
Data Collection Form – SPANISH-SPEAKING PATIENTS

ED Date: _____

1. Triage level: _____ (1-5)

2. Crowding level at the time of the ED visit (NEDOCS score): _____ (1-6)

3. Time spent during ED visit: _____ (in minutes)

4. Medical record number (for reference, to be entered after completion of form): _____

Parte I. Encuesta

1. ¿En qué idioma se le da a la entrevista médica?
 Inglés Otro (especificar): _____

2. ¿En qué idioma prefiere recibir servicios médicos?
 Inglés Español Otro (especificar): _____
 a. Si no habla inglés, ¿qué tan bien habla inglés?
 Muy mala Un poco Bien

3. ¿En qué idioma le habló la persona de recepción?
 Inglés Español Otro (especificar): _____
 a. ¿Pudieron hablar con usted en su idioma preferido?
 Sí No

4. ¿Cómo llegaron al departamento de emergencias hoy?
 Ambulancia Sí mismo Otro (especificar): _____

5. ¿Al momento de su visita al departamento de emergencias, ¿se le preguntó si gustaría un intérprete?
 Sí No No aplica
 a. Si la respuesta es sí, ¿pidió un intérprete?
 Sí No No aplica
 Si usted dijo que no a un intérprete, pero en realidad prefiere hablar en idioma que no sea inglés, ¿por qué dijo que no?
 Preocupación por el costo
 Preocupación por el tiempo de espera
 Preocupación por la calidad de la interpretación
 Trato a alguien con usted para interpretar
 Otra razón (favor de especificar): _____

b. Si la respuesta es no, ¿pidió un intérprete?
 Sí No No aplica
 Si la respuesta es sí, ¿qué pasó cuando lo pidió?
 Buena
 Mala
 Otra (especificar): _____

c. ¿Qué dijo la persona del triage el primer día de su visita sobre los servicios de interpretación en general?
 Buena
 Mala
 Otra (especificar): _____

6. ¿Cabe usted que la ley en los Estados Unidos le da el derecho a un intérprete cuando visita una clínica o hospital?
 Sí No

7. Durante su visita de hoy, ¿se le informó de su derecho a un intérprete?
 Sí No No aplica
 a. Si la respuesta es sí, ¿se le informó que los servicios de interpretación son gratuitos?
 Sí No No aplica

8. Durante su visita de hoy, ¿se utilizó consistentemente un intérprete en...
 a. ¿En el triaje en español?
 Sí No
 Traducción
 Video
 Empañado
 Otro (especificar): _____
 b. ¿Habla español?
 Sí No No aplica
 Por lo general, ¿con qué facilidad entendió lo que la persona en triage le explicó durante su visita?
 Absolutamente difícil de entender
 Un poco difícil
 Algo fácil
 Bastante fácil
 Completamente fácil de entender

9. ¿Fue utilizado por algún médico?
 Sí No
 Traducción
 Video
 Empañado
 Otro (especificar): _____

10. Por lo general, ¿con qué facilidad entendió lo que el/la enfermero/a le explicó durante su visita?
 Absolutamente difícil de entender
 Un poco difícil
 Algo fácil
 Bastante fácil
 Completamente fácil de entender

11. ¿Fue utilizado por algún médico?
 Sí No
 Traducción
 Video
 Empañado
 Otro (especificar): _____

Patient Data Collection Form – Spanish

Results

- Of the 206 individuals approached, **198 agreed to participate (96.1% response rate)**, with **50.5% (100/198) of interviews in English** and **46.5% (92/198) in Spanish**.
- Mean age** was 46.8 years.
- For **ethnic background**, 47% (93/198) of patients were of Mexican origin, 20.2% (40/198) were Central American, and 17.2% (34/198) were Not Hispanic/Latino.
- As for **language**, 58.1% (115/198) patients were characterized as LEP, meaning they spoke English less than “very well” on a 4 point Likert Scale. 99.1% (114/115) of these patients reported Spanish as their preferred language.
- At ED triage, only 24.3% (28/115) of LEP patients were asked if they would like an **interpreter**. Of those reporting not being offered an interpreter, 90.1% (82/91) asked for one.
- When asked about knowledge of **language laws**, 69.6% (80/115) of LEP patients knew the legal right to a language interpreter, and 17.4% (20/115) were informed of the law at triage. 51.3% (59/115) of LEP patients knew that language interpretation is free.
- For **interpretive services received**, of the 121 patients who completed Spanish-language surveys, 62.8% (76/121) received language interpretation at triage, 70.3% (85/121) from nurses, and 70.3% (85/121) from the medical provider.

Conclusion

- A high percentage of LEP patients reported significant gaps in knowledge of language access laws, and in disclosure of these laws during visits to the ED. Therefore, future language access policies must be guided to better serve LEP individuals.

Limitations

- A convenience sample has limited generalizability and no random sampling was used
- Geographically limited to one public hospital in a state that is known to have progressive policies towards language services and immigration enforcement

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