

Ethically Speaking: Spanish Bilingual Medical Student Certification

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Rationale

- Since 2000, the Department of Health and Human Services has mandated that health care providers assure patient safety through competent language assistance at all levels of care
- Bilingual medical students frequently provide direct patient care and interpret for their teams
- The current medical education system lacks a standardized method to evaluate students' bilingual competency and therefore their ability to provide quality care in a foreign language

Background

In 2008 Loyola medical students began improving care for Spanish-speaking patients by creating the Peer-Led Medical Spanish Program that offers:

- Weekly language classes at multiple levels
- Training in cultural competency
- Interpreter shadowing experiences
- Placement with Spanish-speaking preceptors

Certification Model

- Evaluate students' Medical Spanish and cultural competency skills in the various capacities medical students serve
- Provide students with objective and formative feedback to improve their bilingual skills
- Help medical staff, patients, and outside programs recognize Certified Bilingual Spanish Medical Students via ID badge and transcript notations



Clinician Cultural/Linguistic Assessment

- Validated, standardized phone exam developed by ALTA Language Services and Kaiser Permanente
- Simulates primary care encounters through guided interviews pertaining to medical and sociocultural situations
- Subjectively assesses communicative competence, fluency, pronunciation, customer service, and cultural proficiency
- Guided interviews objectively measure ability to:
 - Elicit and reproduce history details
 - Explain a differential diagnosis
 - Respond to patients' questions
 - Give treatment instructions
 - Provide follow up directions

Objective Standardized Clinical Exam

- Developed and administered by Stritch School of Medicine
- Based on patient cases and evaluation criteria currently used to evaluate medical students upon completing second year
- Measured skills not observed in phone exams:
 - Face-to-face interpersonal skills
 - Cultural sensitivity in both history and physical exam
 - Completing an unprompted clinical encounter
 - Eliciting medical information and using it to make a clinical decision
 - Communicating information obtained in Spanish to English-speaking team members

Qualified Bilingual Staff

- Validated, standardized phone exam developed by ALTA Language Services and Kaiser Permanente
- Objectively measures Medical Spanish knowledge and fluency
- Subjectively evaluates pronunciation, grammar, conduit role, conveying the meaning, and fluidity in language transition
- Tasks:
 - Social conversation
 - Customer service interpretation
 - Diagnosis and instructions interpretation
 - Sight translation
 - Bilingual medical vocabulary

Program Outcomes

- Ten students took exams and earned certification
- All students felt the certification was a valuable experience
- All students reported the certification makes it easier for others to recognize their Medical Spanish
- Of the three exams, students rated the Standardized Patient Exam highest in terms of:
 - Help understand bilingual skills
 - Provide recommendations to improve skills
 - Test skills used as a medical student
 - Provide accurate assessment of skills

Student Feedback

"I think that the certification is a great idea since it gave me more confidence in my Spanish-speaking capabilities, provided useful feedback in methods to improve my Spanish, and will allow me to convey to residencies that I can use Spanish in the clinical setting."



"I really appreciated the feedback regarding more cultural approaches to Spanish-speaking patients. This is different than how we are taught regarding professionalism in our approach to English-speaking patients."

"I also think it is helpful to define what level of Spanish a student is so that other physicians can trust the interpreting job the student is doing for the safety of the patient."

