

# The Language of Patient Safety: Spanish Bilingual Medical Student Certification

## Team Membership

Katherine O'Rourke, M3

Erin Stratta, M3

Jason Howell, M3

Dr. Gregory Gruener, Senior Associate Dean, Medical Education

Dr. Scott Graziano, Clerkship Director, Assistant Professor, Obstetrics and Gynecology

Donna Quinones, Manager, Clinical Skills

Beth Sonntag, Director, Teaching and Learning Center

# Opportunity Statement

Language concordance between patient and health care provider improves health care outcomes. (1, 2)

Patient safety is put in jeopardy when students with limited Spanish proficiency inappropriately decline the assistance of professional interpreters.

Two years after implementing a Peer-Led Medical Spanish Program, Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine furthered its dedication to assure patient safety through competent language assistance by implementing the Spanish Bilingual Medical Student Certification.

1. Divi C, Koss RG, Schmaltz SP, Loeb JM. Language proficiency and adverse events in US hospitals: A pilot study. *Int J Qual Health Care.* 2007;19(2):60-7.
2. Yawmna D, McIntosh S, Fernandez D, Auinger P, Allan M, Weitzman M. The use of Spanish by medical students and residents at one university hospital. *Acad Med.* 2006;81(5):468-73.

# AIM Statement

The Spanish Bilingual Medical Student Certification aims to identify students who can provide bilingual care without an interpreter's assistance before they begin clinical rotations, thereby increasing patient safety.

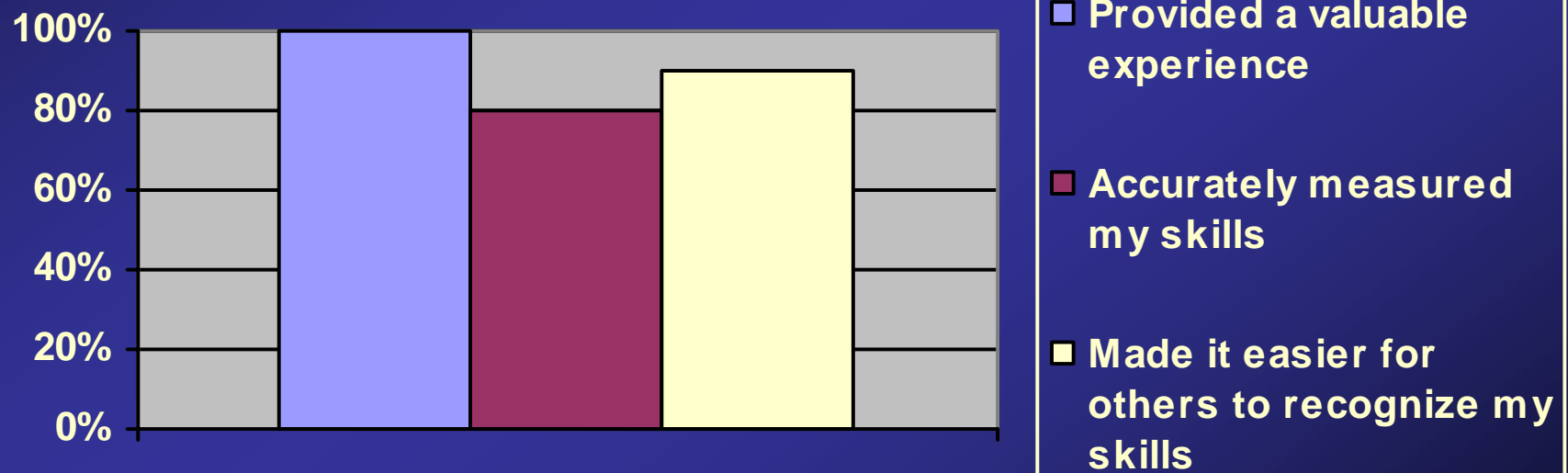
# Solutions Implemented

- The Certification was implemented in 2010.
- It evaluates students' Medical Spanish and cultural competency skills through two standardized phone exams designed to validate physicians' and bilingual staff members' skills and an objective standardized clinical exam.
- Students who pass all three component exams will be recognized by ID tags and transcript notations.
- Certified students will receive priority placement at Spanish-speaking clinical sites.

# Results

- 10 students successfully earned the certification and are currently caring for Spanish-speaking patients during their clerkships.
- 100% of the students reported the Certification provided a valuable experience
- 80% reported it accurately measured their skills
- 90% reported it made it easier for others to recognize their skills

# Student Reports of Certification Outcomes



# Analysis

- The Certification has helped students recognize how to safely use their Spanish skills while caring for patients.
- Patients are better able to understand and play an active role in their health care as Certified Students facilitate their communication with the health care team.
- We will be able to observe the full benefits of the program once the Certification is fully integrated into the clinical curriculum and medical center staff and patients are more familiar with the program and the resources certified students offer.

# Next Steps

The Spanish Bilingual Medical Student Certification will serve as a model to be adapted to bilingual physicians and medical staff members and to be adopted by other institutions.



Students and employee standardized patients during the objective standardized clinical exam.



## Spanish Bilingual Medical Student Certification



LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO  
Stritch School  
of Medicine

I have successfully completed the SSOM Spanish Bilingual Medical Student Certification. As a certified student, I am:

- culturally and linguistically competent to complete the duties of a medical student in Spanish without the assistance of an interpreter.
- able to facilitate communication between the health-care team and Spanish-speaking patients.

# HABLO ESPAÑOL

## Estudiante Certificado como Hispanohablante



LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO  
Stritch School  
of Medicine

Soy un(a) estudiante de medicina certificado/a como bilingüe en Español por SSOM. Por lo tanto, soy competente culturalmente e lingüísticamente para:

- hacer los deberes de un(a) estudiante de medicina en Español sin ayuda de un(a) intérprete.
- facilitar comunicación entre el equipo de asistencia médica y los pacientes que hablan Español.

# HABLO ESPAÑOL

