

HPEI Spring Mini-symposium

Title: ¡Sí Se Puede! Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of a Medical Spanish Certificate Program for Medical Students

Background: In the United States, 41% of Hispanics have limited English proficiency.¹ Hispanics constitute 18% of the U.S. population, which is predicted to increase to 29% by 2060.¹ Quality of provider-patient communication impacts health outcomes,² and linguistic barriers result in disparities in health equity.³ Wake Forest School of Medicine does not have formal educational opportunities in medical Spanish. Students express strong interest, and the medical school administration strongly supports the creation of a program to fill this need. Program development during academic year 2018-2019 is an active collaborative effort between the School of Medicine and the Wake Forest undergraduate Spanish department.

Objectives: 1) Develop and implement a medical Spanish certificate program for medical students. 2) Demonstrate learner improvement in communicating with patients in Spanish in the clinical setting.

Methods: First year medical students with intermediate to advanced Spanish proficiency will be eligible to apply for the program. Students will learn in small group settings and participate in community service activities. Knowledge integration will occur through encounters with Spanish-speaking standardized patients. Student progress will be assessed through testing, faculty and patient feedback, and student self-assessment. Parametric and non-parametric assessments will be used to determine statistically significant improvement in quantitative and qualitative performance throughout the program and between classes.

Evaluation Plan: At the beginning and end of the program, an oral language examination will be administered by ALTA Language Services, an independent language testing service. Standardized feedback forms will be completed by observing faculty and patients during standardized patient encounters. Student performance also may be assessed by Spanish-speaking patients through standardized patient surveys. Regular self-assessments will be performed by students. During the program, students will have the opportunity to take the ALTA Clinician Cultural and Linguistic Assessment to obtain bilingual provider certification.

Conclusions: A medical Spanish certificate program is valuable for equipping learners to care effectively for Spanish-speaking patients. Systematic methods are essential to demonstrate improved learner competency and to advance the state of medical Spanish education at Wake Forest School of Medicine.⁴ This has potential to impact positively a large, currently underserved patient population, improve quality of care, and address health disparities.⁵

Questions:

1. In the U.S., medical Spanish programs encounter many barriers to implementation and sustenance, frequently citing the lack of educators, lack of time in curriculum, and lack of educator training. What are suggestions for recruiting and training quality educators to a new program?
2. Given that students have competing demands during medical school, we are considering delivering content using methods that contribute to flexibility and foster independent learning in addition to formal class time, such as the use of podcasts, apps, and other methods. In what ways have podcasts, apps, or other methods been successfully implemented by WF educators?
3. Are there currently existing patient surveys that can be adapted for students in this program to be assessed by patients during clinical rotations? For what kind of skills and to what extent would patient feedback be meaningful?

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References:

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