

‘¿Habla Español? A Longitudinal Program Equipping Students to Care for Spanish-speaking Patients’

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CURRICULAR INNOVATIONS

Problem/Needs Assessment:

Forty-one percent of Hispanics in the United States have limited English proficiency, and this population is predicted to increase from 18% to 29% by 2060.¹ Language discordance results in poor patient-clinician communication, less access to care, lower visit comprehension, and disparities in safety, quality of care, and health equity.^{2,3}

Program Objectives:

To equip students to become culturally respectful Spanish-speaking physicians who will go on to care for the increasing number of Hispanic patients in Winston-Salem and throughout the U.S.

Description of Program:

MAESTRO (Medical Applied Education in Spanish through Training, Resources, and Overlearning) is a certificate program offered to first-year medical students with intermediate/advanced Spanish proficiency. Launched in 2019, 9 students were accepted into the inaugural program cohort. The four-year longitudinal program is designed to run concurrently with the traditional MD curriculum. The MAESTRO Year 1 curriculum consists of 9 faculty-led workshops, technology-based learning, community engagement, and standardized patient encounters. Interactive workshops include instruction, clinical communication practice, and role play. MAESTRO is an innovative collaboration between Wake Forest School of Medicine faculty, Wake Forest University Spanish faculty, and a Student Design Team to deliver an effective, learner-oriented curriculum.

Evaluation/Assessment:

We conducted learner evaluations during Year 1 at 3 months and at 6 months to measure workshop effectiveness and impact on students' knowledge and cultural understanding. Items were measured on a 10-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree, 10-strongly agree). At 3 months, 87.5% of students agreed that the workshops advanced their fund of medical Spanish knowledge (median=8), compared to 100% at 6 months (median=9). At 3 and 6 months, 100% agreed that the workshops advanced their cultural understanding pertaining to communication with Hispanic patients, and the median improved from 8 to 10, respectively. 87.5% of students agreed that teaching methods were effective at 3 months (median=7.5), compared to 100% at 6 months (median=10).

Conclusions and Lessons Learned:

Physician-patient language concordance is an important factor in providing safe and effective healthcare.² Students report positive benefits, which improved over time, of the MAESTRO Program on medical Spanish knowledge and cultural understanding. Future research plans include pre-/post- self-assessment surveys and standardized fluency assessments to evaluate participants' progress.

References:

1. Colby SL, Ortman JM. Projections of the size and composition of the US population: 2014 to 2060: Population estimates and projections. 2017.
2. Diamond L, Izquierdo K, Canfield D, Matsoukas K, Gany F. A systematic review of the impact of patient-physician non-English language concordance on quality of care and outcomes. *J Gen Intern Med.* 2019 Aug;34(8):1591-1606.
3. Ortega P. Spanish Language Concordance in U.S. Medical Care: A Multifaceted Challenge and Call to Action. *Acad Med.* 2018;93(9):1276-1280.