

Healthcare, Language, and Culture: What the Joint Commission is Learning

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Organizations

What We Know

- Healthcare disparities exist
- Changing demographics across the nation
- Strained health care system- over burdened
- Various recommendations, eg : CLAS Standards; need for interpreters; need for better data; need for better tools and tested interventions
- Desire for regulatory or accreditation “push”
- Joint Commission standards may not be enough

What We Want to Know

- How can existing national recommendations be operationalized in the healthcare institution?
- How prepared are healthcare providers to meet the needs of diverse patients?
- Are healthcare providers aware of the needs of diverse patients?
- Are existing accreditation standards enough? What is reasonable?
- How can we provide the needed “push” without overburdening the system?

Background Research

- Consultation with Advisory Groups
- Comparison of Joint Commission and CLAS standards
- Review of accreditation recommendations
- Surveyor questionnaire
- Literature Review

Background Research- Conclusions

- Not enough evidence
- Not enough data
- Not enough buy-in
- Not enough awareness of the issue

Hospitals, Language, and Culture: A Snapshot of the Nation

- Funded by The California Endowment
- 2.5 years January 2004 through June 2006
- Largest qualitative study of its kind
- Desire to gain greater understanding of the perspectives and experiences of hospitals across the nation
- National Technical Advisory Panel
- Project Advisors
- Statistical Advisor

HLC Research Questions

- What are the challenges that hospitals across the nation are facing as they provide health care to an increasingly diverse patient population?
- What are hospitals across the nation doing to address these challenges?
- Are there emerging practices that can be shared with the field and replicated to help address issues related to CLAS?

Research Framework- 6 Domains

- Leadership
- Quality Improvement and Data Use
- Workforce
- Patient Safety and Provision of Care
- Language Services
- Community Engagement

Hospitals Language and Culture Study Design

- Sample of 60 Hospitals
 - Purposive
 - Hand Selected
 - Various hospital characteristics (bed size, teaching/non-teaching, public/private, etc)
- Pre-visit Questionnaire completed by each hospital
- One day Site Visits at each hospital

HLC Expected Outcomes

- Qualitative study- results suggestive, but can't be generalized
- Looking for better understanding of practice trends, workforce diversity, use of language services, use of data and performance measurement related to the provision of health care to diverse populations
- Identification of follow up research
- Inform future accreditation standards

More work in this area:

**Understanding Adverse Medical Events
for Minority Patients with
Limited English Proficiency**

A Commonwealth Fund Grant

Purpose

Investigate the epidemiology of adverse events and near misses attributed to patient-provider communication problems related to language barriers and identify potential quality improvement interventions for limited English proficient patients.

Methods

- 6 JCAHO accredited hospitals in 6 different states
- De-identified adverse event and near miss data collected from existing hospital incident reporting systems
- Data examined for causative and contributive factors
- Data stratified by English-speaking and LEP patients to examine incidence and patterns of adverse events

Expected Outcomes

- Information on the impact of LEP status on the occurrence of adverse events
- Identification of causative and contributive factors of adverse events attributable to language barriers
- Identification of potential preventive strategies
- Inform policy on language services in the context of patient safety
- Identify further research opportunities
- Inform accreditation standards

And Finally...

- New standards requirement IM.6.20
 - Language and communication needs documented in patient record
- Health Literacy and Patient Safety Roundtable
- Speak Up Campaign

For More Information

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