

**Question:**

How can today's nurses communicate effectively with patients who have a language barrier during their time in the hospital?

**Summary:**

It is well known in health care that communication plays a critical role in the patient's care, especially for nurses. Establishing good communication from the start of patient care is essential to understand the patient's concerns and needs. When it comes to having patients who are culturally diverse or have a language barrier, it limits the patients in many ways. Patients can be affected by delaying their care, not interpreting medication instructions clearly, not understanding the purpose of medical treatment and more.

Nurses cannot communicate effectively when there is a language barrier in place. This then prevents nurses from providing efficient patient centered care. An article stated that "it has been demonstrated that for patients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, language barriers contribute to poorer quality of care and patient safety." (De Moissac et., 2019). In order to provide safe, effective patient care nurses need to be proactive in identifying ways to communicate with their patients. There are many options out there to communicate with patients who are inefficient in speaking English. "With the advancement of technologies, possibilities of managing language barriers have improved." (Al Shamsi et al., 2020). One of the main ways nurses have been able to minimize the impact of language barriers is using professional interpreters. "The use of professional interpreters reduces costs, improves healthcare and increases medical safety. Several studies show that treatment time increases, and patient-safe communication

decreases when professional interpreters are not used.” (Granhagen et al., 2019). The use of professional interpreters can be used through a video device, a phone call, or by an “in house” person. Although it would be ideal to always use a professional interpreter, it is not always the case that they are readily available. In these cases, nurses often turn to social apps like Google Translate or to their peers who are bilingual. These ways may not be as effective as a professional interpreter, but it gets the job done safely. Despite these difficulties, nurses have improved patient care when involving different methods of communication with their patients who have a language barrier.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, after examining different articles about ways that nurses can communicate efficiently with their patients who have a language barrier, the main way to break that barrier is to use interpreters. Patient care becomes more efficient and safer when using an interpreter that can safely translate for the patient. Whether that be for medication education, discharge teaching, answering patient concerns, and any questions that a patient, who is not able to speak English, may have. It is important for nurses to be able to provide the same efficient communication and care for a patient who does not have a language barrier and also for a patient who does have a language barrier. Having professional interpreters may not always be ideal for nurses especially when there is an emergency, and they are not readily available. Other resources that are just as effective would be using a coworker who happens to speak that native language or using different social apps. When nurses use these resources, they are able to communicate, build rapport, and provide great and safe medical care for the patient.

## **Works Cited:**

### **Primary Article**

De Moissac, D., & Bowen, S. (2019). Impact of language barriers on quality of care and patient safety for official language minority Francophones in Canada. *Journal of Patient Experience*, 6(1), 24-32.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2374373518769008>

### **Secondary Article**

Granhagen Jungner, J., Tiselius, E., Blomgren, K., Lützén, K., & Pergert, P. (2019). Language barriers and the use of professional interpreters: a national multisite cross-sectional survey in pediatric oncology care. *Acta Oncologica*, 58(7), 1015-1020.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/0284186X.2019.1594362>

### **Tertiary article**

Al Shamsi, H., Almutairi, A. G., Al Mashrafi, S., & Al Kalbani, T. (2020). Implications of language barriers for healthcare: a systematic review. *Oman medical journal*, 35(2), e122.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7201401/>