

Working with Deaf Patients in Healthcare



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Introduction

The Deaf community face poorer health outcomes due to significant barriers accessing healthcare and communication challenges. 117,315 people use British Sign Language (BSL) in Scotland¹ and for many this is their preferred and often first language. Over 75% of Deaf patients report difficulty communicating with hospital staff; many leave GP appointments uncertain about their condition or how to take medication. A two-fold prevalence of mental health conditions further compounds this health inequality.² Systems are in place to access Face-to-Face interpreters and it is vital that healthcare teams are aware of this need and can work effectively with this patient group.

Overview of Development Process

Starting with lived experience of a BSL user, this session will be delivered to 45 medical students undertaking their final hospital placement. Pre- and Post-session questionnaires will be distributed for evaluation.

Development of the session involved close working with expert professionals such as interpreting colleagues, Deaf Services Lanarkshire (DSL) and the Scottish Mental Health Service for Deaf Patients, drawing on their expertise in working with this unique patient group.

An engagement event will be held with DSL to ensure the lived experience from a number of Deaf role models informs the session. The question "What would you like a new doctor to know?" will be asked, with an invitation to share previous healthcare experiences.

Session Outline

- **Adapted Deaf awareness session**
 - Deaf role model signing without interpretation
 - *Simulating the challenge of communicating without interpreters*
 - Lived healthcare experiences from Deaf role models
 - Myth-busting of common preconceptions
 - Lip-reading exercises
 - *Highlighting its variable use and associated challenges*
 - How to gain the attention of a Deaf person
 - Basic BSL signs and alphabet
- **Working with interpreters**
 - Top Tips
 - Simulated role-play of consultations with and without interpreters
- **Scottish Mental Health Service for Deaf Patients**
 - Links between mental health and Deafness
 - Differences in presentation and assessment

Essential Elements of the Development Process



Conclusion & Future Recommendations

Keeping lived experience at the forefront, this session aims to address the need to tackle Deaf health inequalities through medical education. We would strongly encourage others to replicate this process in their own educational and healthcare settings through forging key links with local Deaf organisations to work together towards equal healthcare access.

References

1. National Records of Scotland, Scotland's Census 2022.
2. The Deaf Health Charity Signhealth. A Report Into the Health of Deaf People in the UK. (2014).



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