

**Communicating with Deaf Adults: Implementation of a Provider and Staff-Focused  
Educational Program at a Primary Care Center**

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## COMMUNICATING WITH DEAF ADULTS

### Abstract

**Background/Purpose:** Primary care professionals are well-positioned to reduce the health inequities seen among the deaf population; however, they receive little to no training on communicating effectively with deaf patients. This quality improvement (QI) project implemented a staff-directed, mixed-method training program to improve the communication between the staff and deaf patients of a privately-owned primary care practice.

**Methods:** Program effectiveness was evaluated using a pre/post-intervention design among two sample populations; providers/staff (n=28) and deaf adult patients (n=22). Staff were evaluated using knowledge tests and the Self Efficacy-12 (SE-12) questionnaire. Patients were evaluated using a practice-based patient satisfaction survey. Data were collected over 12-weeks and analyzed using Wilcoxon Signed-Rank tests.

**Results:** The median summary score of the staff's baseline knowledge and post-test revealed a statistically significant 1-point improvement (IQR: 1.75; p=.019). The difference in SE-12 scores pre- and 4 weeks post-intervention revealed a median improvement of 18.5 points (IQR: 49.8, p<.001), 4-weeks and 12-weeks post-intervention improved by a median 6.5 points (IQR: 17.8, p=.003), and the baseline and 12-weeks scores improved by a median 21.5-points (IQR: 57.5, p<.001). All three comparisons were statistically significant. The difference in the pre/post patient satisfaction scores showed a significant 5-point improvement (SD=14.3, p=.004).

**Conclusions:** This QI project found significant improvement in the staff's knowledge and self-efficacy when communicating with deaf adults. Furthermore, it resulted in increased deaf patients' satisfaction.

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***Implications:*** This project can serve as a foundation for other primary care practices to implement on-site communication training to reduce the health disparities seen amongst this medically vulnerable population.

***Keywords:*** Deaf, Primary Care, Communication, Training program, healthcare providers.