

Providence St. Joseph Health

Providence St. Joseph Health Digital Commons

[View All](#)

2020 Nursing Summit

9-2020

Language Diversity in the Healthcare Workplace and its Impact in the Delivery of Patient Care and Teamwork

Daisy Bolla

Catherine Albano

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.psjhealth.org/summit_all



Part of the [Health and Medical Administration Commons](#), and the [Nursing Commons](#)



Introduction

As the United States becomes increasingly diverse and as individuals choose to be more acculturated than assimilated, the “American” workplace faces many challenges. Communication is more often than not, the most significant hurdle to achieving cultural competence. Thus language differences become an immediate factor in transforming an organization from one that is merely diverse to one that is competent in addressing issues of culture (Foyer, 2010).

Objectives

To identify the impact of linguistic diversity in the healthcare workplace in terms of patient care and safety as well as workplace relationship building.

Method

The following 4 articles and 2 studies were researched to provide a description, summary and critical evaluation to answer the objective of this poster presentation:

1. How To Deal With Diversity in the Healthcare Workplace
2. Diversity in the Healthcare Workplace
3. The New Look of Diversity in Healthcare: Where We Are and Where We Were Headed
4. The Importance of Diversity in Healthcare Programs
5. This Language Thing: The Pros & Cons of Speaking One’s Native Dialect at Work
6. Culture and Language Differences as a Barrier to Provision of Quality Care by the Healthcare Workforce in Saudi Arabia

Findings

Employees’ use of a language other than English in the workplace presents many considerations in the employment law context. An individual’s language is tightly tied with race and national origin, which are protected categories under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and many states’ anti-discrimination laws (Russell,2017).

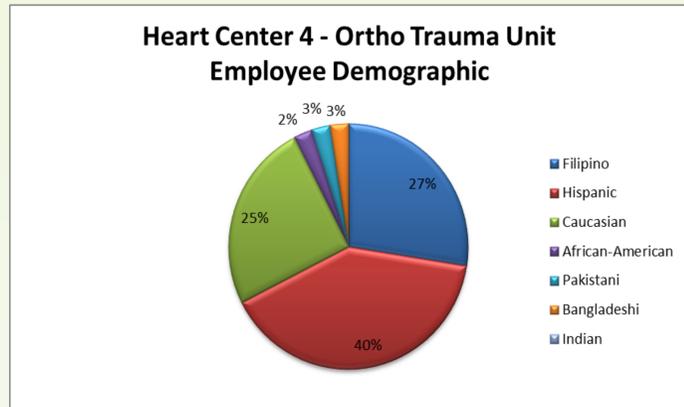
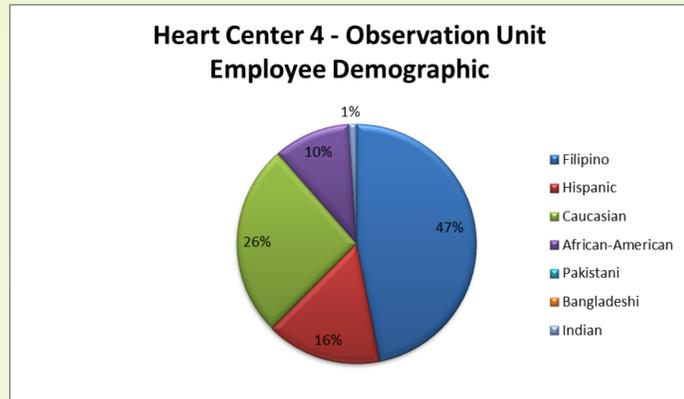
EEOC Regulation Section 1606.7 Speak-English-only rule states that requiring English to be spoken at all times disadvantages an individual’s employment opportunities on the basis of national origin, which could result in a discriminatory working environment. It also states that an English-only policy that applies at certain times and for which an employer can demonstrate a business necessity, i.e., for customer/consumer satisfaction, conversations with co-workers, and Safety-sensitive types of work is appropriate (this would include healthcare).

According to a study done by Quilao, Wilson et al (2017), linguistic diversity has a great impact on teamwork. Employees “speaking in a foreign language can be disruptive, exclusionary, and downright rude”. While having some employees speaking in a foreign language may not affect performance directly, it can have a debilitating effect on team morale. Lastly, speaking a foreign language in the workplace may create an uncomfortable and divisive work environment.

English-only workplaces can be lawful but may not be desirable. (2003, April 1). Pittsburgh.

Graph

The graphs below represent the overall composition of Heart Center 4 employees:



CONCLUSION

One of the greatest challenges in working with a diverse group is how to create an environment of inclusion when there is language differences. A group of employees who speak the same language can start talking in their dialect about matters they get excited about without realizing that other caregivers are listening to them and may think that they are talking about them.

When Speak- English-only rule is implemented, it can also pose a sense of discrimination to bilingual employees. However, in order to have better understanding and harmonious relationship in the healthcare workplace, speaking a language that everybody understands should be implemented for patient safety.

Recommendations for Practice

Heart Center 4 Observation share a common breakroom with Heart Center 4 Ortho- Trauma. This unit is a good example of diversity in healthcare workplace.

As team members we should all be sensitive and courteous. No team member should feel excluded.

Recognize that people from different backgrounds often have different ways of communicating. This is vital to explaining medical issues to patients.

Take time to learn basic elements of the language. Educate yourself about preferences, cultural norms and communication differences.

There are places and times when it is completely appropriate for employees to speak in their native language.

All team members should respect one another’s cultural backgrounds and preferences. Diversity is a two-way street and our aim is to deliver the best care for our patients.

