

Communicating With Latino Patients

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Introduction

Latinos are people born or residing in Latin America and can be of any race or a combination of races. In access to healthcare, Latinos experience many challenges, such as political, social barriers, and language barriers because they have limited English proficiency (Escobedo et al., 2023). According to the report released by the U.S. Census Bureau (2023), Spanish speakers living in the United States recorded the highest percentage of people with LEP. Besides, Spanish speakers recorded the lowest percentage of U.S. residents with the lowest fluency in English (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). The goal of this paper is to describe the primary means of communication used by Latinos.

Definition Of The Issue

Latino is a term used to refer to any person of “Latin-America” descent (Escobedo et al., 2023). The issue presented in this case is the communication challenges faced by Latinos in accessing healthcare. Communication is the process of sharing information via the exchange of verbal and non-verbal messages. A language barrier exists where the messages are not portrayed properly. The Latino population constitutes 17% of the total U.S. population, of which 64% have limited English proficiency.

Example Of People/ Group Affected By The Issue

In the U.S., Spanish speakers include any person from Mexico, South or Central America, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. On the other hand, Latinos are people from Latin America (Escobedo et al., 2023). The term “Hispanic” originated in the 1970s when the Census required Americans to identify themselves in terms of their country of origin, such as Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Central/South America, or “other Hispanics.” The terms Latinos and Hispanics are used interchangeably and describe the group of U.S. citizens with LEP. The Latino population constitutes 17% (55 Million) of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023).

The Significance Of The Impact Of The Issue On Society

Latinos with limited English proficiency have various health challenges, such as diabetes and obesity.

Such people record poorer health outcomes when compared with Native Americans with English proficiency when grouped in terms of education, age, and sex (Escobedo et al., 2023). The barriers in communication pose a significant health issue with the increasing population of Latinos in the United States and the increasing access to health services. According to the report released by the U.S Census Bureau (2023), three-quarters of the Latino population had insurance services. The implementation of the Affordable Care Act will make more families and individuals eligible to access health insurance, hence increasing the number of insured Latinos.

Origin Or History Of The Issue

Latinos originated from Latin America and other colonies of Spain. These colonies include both the Caribbean and the contemporary United States of America. The Latinos include Afro-Latinos, Indigenous, Mestizos, and other mixed-race people. The history of Latinos spans more than four hundred years ago. After the end of the Mexican-American war in 1783, the Latinos became the first American citizens to occupy the newly acquired Southwest territory. Latinos occupied the majority of several states of the United States until the 20th century. Therefore, the origin of communication difficulties between Latinos and healthcare providers can be dated back to the 17th century.

Implications Of Healthcare For The Issue

The existence of communication barriers between Latinos and healthcare providers implies that there will be health disparities. The Latino group evidences some of these worst disparities in the healthcare setting. The Latino population experiences challenges of chronic illnesses, tuberculosis, STDs, and cirrhosis, among others. However, such people are unable to access quality healthcare due to limited English proficiency. The health disparities arise from a complex lack of proper understanding of genetic, psychosocial, biological, and economic factors. The disparity is heightened by inequality and discrimination in the Latino community (Escobedo et al., 2023).

Impact Of The Issue On The Nursing Practice

Several studies have been carried out on the effects of communication barriers on healthcare. Some of the impacts of the language barrier include increased risks of medication errors, which can lead to patient dissatisfaction (Kwan et al., 2023). Besides, a study conducted in the United Kingdom showed that language barriers increase the likelihood of returning to institutions in the future with the same conditions as before. Moreover, another research conducted on the Latino population in the U.S. in 2000 established a strong relationship between communication difficulties and follow-up treatments. In the nursing practice, the language barrier gives leads to patient compliance. The patients experience more problems in understanding the physician, or the health specialist is less likely to administer treatment using the correct treatment directions. Therefore, good communication is

important in the nursing practice not only for obtaining accurate information but also because it is a source of motivation, support, and reassurance.

Role Of The Nurse In The Management Of The Issue

For proper service delivery, the nurse has a responsibility to ensure there are proper means of communication between him and the Latino patient. In the United States, Latinos constitute 17% of the population, and 64% of the population have limited English proficiency. In cases where a patient with limited English proficiency (LEP) seeks medical assistance, the nurse should ensure either one of the three means of communication: family member translation, physician language concordance, or professional translation. The gold standard for addressing this issue in healthcare is through paid translators (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 2025; Kwan et al., 2023). The nurse should always offer quality care based on patient-centeredness, and effective communication is one of the strategies for achieving the same, according to the Institute of Medicine.

Personal Position On The Healthcare Issue

In my position, language barriers between Latinos and healthcare professionals in the United States are a real issue that needs to be addressed. According to statistical data, 64% of the Latino population in the United States has limited English proficiency. The percentage is quite high, and this implies that healthcare professionals working in Central and South America, where the Latino population is high, will always encounter the issue. Therefore, in my opinion, hospitals should always ensure that their physicians are trained in physician language concordance, as this will significantly assist in addressing the challenge (HHS, 2025).

Conclusion

Communication is the process of sharing information either through verbal means or non-verbal cues. A language barrier exists where the messages are not portrayed properly. Latinos encounter many challenges in access to healthcare, such as political, social barriers, and language barriers because they have limited English proficiency. Latinos constitute 17% of the population, and 64% of the population have limited English proficiency. Some of the impacts of the language barrier include increased risks of medication errors, which can lead to patient dissatisfaction (Kwan et al., 2023). Family member translation, physician language concordance, or professional translation are some of the ways of overcoming communication barriers in the Latino community (HHS, 2025).

References

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