

# Improving Nurse-Patient Communication by Fostering Nurses' Ethnocultural Empathy

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## Overview

The Improving Nurse-Patient Communication by Fostering Ethnocultural Empathy quality improvement project engaged bedside nurses at an East Bay urban medical center in online cultural competency curriculum and focus group discussion. Nurses Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (SEE) was assessed pre- and post-training using the SEE assessment tool. The intervention implemented entailed nurses completing a nine-hour self-paced online Cultural Competency in Nursing Certification course. Ethnocultural empathy refers to the understanding of feelings of individuals that are ethnically and/or culturally different from oneself. Increases in the U.S. minority population, healthcare needs and health care disparities regulations, ethical and accreditation requirements are making it an imperative that health care providers be culturally competent to provide culturally competent care. As well, national concerns regarding social justice and health disparities have facilitated increased awareness of the importance of cultural awareness in health care delivery.

## PICOT Questions

- PQ1: Can an intervention designed to improve cultural competency improve nurses' empathy for patients from different backgrounds and communication?
- PQ2: Can nurse-patient communication or relationship be improved by fostering healthcare providers' Ethnocultural Empathy?

## Purpose

The purpose of this QI project was to determine whether implementing evidence based cultural competency training would enhance nurses ethnocultural empathy and improve nurse-patient communication CAHPS scores.

## Method

Registered nurses, working on medical surgical units of an urban acute care hospital were recruited to completed a pre- and post-Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (SEE), engaged in online Think Cultural competency / linguistic training modules and focus groups to reflect of personal experiences. This project was completed at the nurses convience, fourteen nurses volunteered to participate and six completed the sixteen-week process. All aspects of the project were completed virtually, except for recruiting.

## Think Culture Tool kit

Think Cultural Health is website sponsored by the U,S Department of Health and Human services, Office of Minority Health. The Culturally Competent Nursing Care: A Cornerstone of Caring is a free e-learning program designed to address the needs of healthcare providers. Free educational resources are available to meet cultural and linguistical needs of nurses, social workers, oral health professionals, first responders, physicians, physician assistants, mental health care providers, and administrators. The three-part self-paced course for nurses is accredited for nine continuing education units by Cine-Med and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (AACC). This e-learning program is grounded in the HHS Office of Minority Health's National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in Health and Health Care. The first course covers how to deliver culturally and linguistically competent nursing care, including a self-awareness tool and strategies for delivering, patient centered care. The second course covers communication and language assistance, including how to work effectively with an interpreter. The third course covers organizational CLAS-related activities, including strategic planning, staff training, and community partnerships.

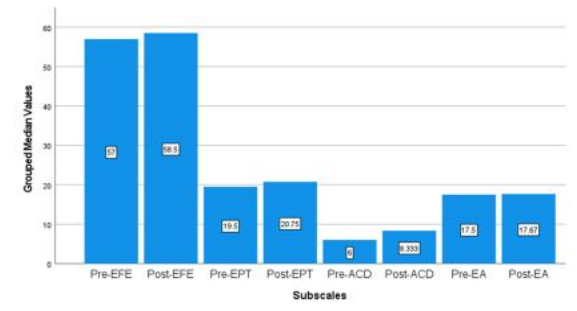
## Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy

The SEE is a 31-item self-report questionnaire aimed at measuring empathy among individuals with racial and/or ethnic backgrounds that do not conform to one's own (Ridley & Lingle 1996). Respondents rate their agreement to every statement along a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree.' Some of the common items include: "I don't understand why people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds enjoy wearing traditional clothing" and "When I hear people make racist jokes, I tell them I am offended even though they are not referring to my racial or ethnic group". The SEE is deemed to portray a good internal consistency and convergent validity, alongside test-retest reliability, with normative values being widely published. The instrument yields a total score and four factor-derived subscales, all of which range from a score of 1 to 6, with higher scores reflecting greater empathy. The subscales are: (1) Empathic Feeling and Expression, comprised of 15 items that assess the degree to which the individual has feelings, thoughts, or actions related to discomfort with injustices or discriminatory practices against others; (2) Empathic Perspective-Taking, which measures one's propensity to understand other's thoughts and experiences, consisting of 7 items; (3) Acceptance of Cultural Differences, engrossing five items, measures the extent to which one accepts and values the traditions and customs of populations disparate from one's own; and (4) Empathic Awareness, which entails four items, focuses on the knowledge an individual has on racial or ethnic experiences other than their own.

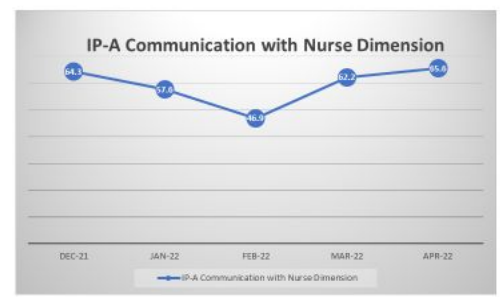
## Consumers Assessment Of Healthcare Providers and Systems

CAHPS (Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems) is a standardized instrument, composed of 32 items—21 substantive items that encompass critical aspects of the hospital experience (communication with doctors, communication with nurses, responsiveness of hospital staff, cleanliness of the hospital environment, quietness of the hospital environment, pain management, communication about medicines, discharge information, overall rating of hospital, recommendation of hospital, and transition to post-hospital care).

SEE Results



CAHPS Results



"Of all forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and the most inhuman, because it often results in death."  
 Dr. Martin Luther King, March 25, 1966

## Conclusion

Results indicate that nurses experienced an increase in their SEE score after participating in online training and focus groups. There was also an increase in the Communication with Nurse dimension of the Consumers Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) score after the project was implemented. Acknowledging the vitality of the SEE in evaluating how people relate to individuals with diverse ethnocultural backgrounds alongside capturing gender and/or race characteristics in empathic sensitivity, the current study has attempted to confirm the hypothesis that nurses would show a substantial increase in ethnocultural empathy from pre- to post-intervention, with the quality metrics hypothesized to improve being the nurse-patient communication score.

## References

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