

**PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF ONLINE STUDY:  
Culture, Language, and Accent in the Medical Community**  
Lynda Katz Wilner, Marjorie Feinstein-Whittaker, Lorna D. Sikorski

There is a substantial body of literature and increased awareness of the diversity in the healthcare setting. The focus has been primarily on the healthcare recipient, not the provider or caregiver. In March 2005, an online, anonymous survey entitled, "Culture, Language and Accent in the Medical Community," was launched. It is open to all native and non-native English speaking professionals working in the medical field. The information about the survey has been disseminated through the American Speech-Language and Hearing Association, the Maryland Speech and Hearing Association listserv, the Med Chi listserv, various other state speech-language-hearing associations, the Corporate Speech Pathology Network (CORSPAN), and through personal networking.

The investigators wanted to learn what types of communication breakdowns International Medical Graduate (IMG) professionals were experiencing, what clinical issues they currently dealt with that affected patient care, and their perceptions of how they have been treated by others due to communication differences. In addition, the perceptions of the native medical professionals were also collected. The current availability of language/accent/cultural training options in the workplace and the perceived necessity and effectiveness of these training programs were addressed.

There were 160 respondents from 19 states representing thirteen different native languages. A wide variety of educational backgrounds, time in the profession and number of years in the U.S. were also reflected by the participants.

Anecdotal data dramatically identified some of the complex communication breakdowns that can compromise the outcomes of patient care. These highlighted the need to address the issues of culture, accent, and language differences when teaching effective communication skills for healthcare providers.

Preliminary results of this study have been presented at the American Speech-Language and Hearing (ASHA) Convention, Miami, FL, November 2006

Attached are more specific results from the survey. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Lynda Katz Wilner of Successfully Speaking at 410-356-5666 or at [LKWilner@successfully-speaking.com](mailto:LKWilner@successfully-speaking.com).

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This survey was completed on 12/31/05 .Following are the preliminary results of the online study (survey) on "Culture, Language and Accent in the Medical Community" by Lynda Katz Wilner, M.S., Marjorie Feinstein-Whittaker, M.S., and Lorna D. Sikorski, M.A.

**Respondents** 160

**Health Care Professionals** 49.7% Masters

4.6% Ph.D.s

19.9% M.Ds

**NATIVE PROFESSIONALS: Have you been in clinical situations where English Language fluency/accent/cultural differences have affected patient care?**

70.3% YES

17.8% NO

**NON-NATIVE PROFESSIONALS: Do you feel you've been perceived or treated differently by patients, colleagues, family members, and others because of language/accent or cultural differences?**

36.4% YES

45.5% NO

**NON-NATIVE PROFESSIONALS: Check any of the following if they represent specific problem areas you have experienced:**

Difficulties with rapport building 58.8%

Trust and credibility issues 23.5%

Difficulties with dictation/reporting 35.3%

Difficulties providing test results/recommendations 23.5%

Problems understanding clinical lectures 11.8%

Problems communicating with colleagues 35.3%

Problems communicating with patients and family members 23.5%