Assessing awareness of second language resources and the feasibility of setting up a volunteer second language database (SLD) at an outpatient clinic

Dr. Farhan M. Asrar, Dr. Suhail Asrar and Dr. Ingeborg Schabort
Relevance and Rationale

• 'Land of Immigrants': 20-25% of the population are foreign born.

• Many immigrants and refugees find language to be among their biggest barriers in Canada.

• External resources are not easily available or costly to implement.

• Family members as translators may be challenging.

• Studies have shown the benefits of using healthcare workers able to communicate in the immigrant/refugee’s native language.

• International Medical Graduates/Doctors (IMGs/IMDs) represent ~ 20-25% of the workforce in Canada, USA, Australia, etc. CMA estimates every year 400 IMGs/IMDs are newly licensed to practice.
Research Question

1) Assess **frequency** of interactions with patients with language barriers.

2) Assess **awareness of resources known by healthcare professionals**.

3) Assess the **feasibility of setting up a voluntary Second Language Database (SLD)**:
   a) Availability of personnel able to speak a second language
   b) Willingness of personnel to volunteer for a SLD.

4) Simultaneously **set-up a working SLD**
Methods and Study Design

- **Research Design**: Feasibility Study (Cross-sectional research).

- **Participation and Sampling**: All personnel at the Stonechurch Family Health Centre (SFHC) in Hamilton, Ontario were invited to participate. The SHFC serves over 17,000 patients in a city of 500,000 people out of which 1 in 4 are recent immigrants or refugees.

- **Research Instrument**: Self-administered questionnaire was specifically designed for this study.

- **Data collection and Consent**: Surveys were distributed at the clinic and consent was implied by completing the survey.

- **Data Analysis**: Frequency were calculated following survey completion.
Results
Participants

Participants in the Study (N = 67 out of a possible of 100)
Results - Question 1: Frequency of interaction with patients with language barriers.

- Yes: 97.3%
- No: 2.7%
Results – Question 2 Awareness of Resources

77.6% of all respondents were unacquainted with any available resources.

(71.1% of all physicians and more specifically 76% of residents were unaware of any available language resources).
3a) Availability of personnel able to speak a second language

- 42% of all surveyed knew a second language
- 25% versed in more than one additional language
Results - Question 3: Feasibility of a SLD

Vast majority agreed/strongly agreed a SLD would be helpful
Results - Question 3: Feasibility of a SLD

3b) Willingness to volunteer for the SLD

66% of physicians proficient in a second language were willing to volunteer.
SLD and IMGs

All staff and resident physicians identified as an International Medical Graduate/Doctor (IMG/IMD):

- Were able to communicate in a second-language.
- Were willing to volunteer for the SLD.
- More than half knew more than two foreign languages.
Results – Question 4: Stonechurch Second Language Database (SSLD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Second Languages Listed (Alphabetical Order)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Albanian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Croatian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dari (Afghani Dialect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Farsi (Persian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Flemish (Dutch Dialect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Gujrati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Hebrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Hungarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Macedonian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Malayalam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Marathi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Portuguese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Romanian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Serbo-Croatian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Sign Language (Basic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Slovenian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Spanish (Basic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most commonly encountered languages at the clinic are among the languages on the SSLD.
Strengths and Limitations

**Strengths:**
- Novel project
- Project involved research and a product towards tackling language barriers

**Limitations:**
- May be challenging to utilize physicians volunteers (but helping colleagues may reduce patient interaction time since the patient would easily understand the conversation).
- Personnel not trained as a translator/interpreter (but physicians may serve as a better option than the alternative of either having no translator or a family member translator).
Conclusions and Recommendations

- Largely unaware of language resources available in the community.
- Lack of awareness is in part due to lack of existing resources.
- A voluntary SLD at FHTs is a feasible proposal.
- Residency program educational sessions and CME sessions may help.
- Healthcare professionals can be a better option as translators.
- IMGs are a valuable resource for patients with language barriers.
References


Thank You
Limited trend seen according to years of experience

Limited trend seen between awareness and years of experience

Awareness of resources among physicians

- Staff: 41.6%
- R2s: 30.8%
- R1s: 16.6%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Staff Family Physician N = 12</th>
<th>R1 Resident N = 12</th>
<th>R2 Resident N - 13</th>
<th>Other Healthcare Professionals* N - 23</th>
<th>Administration and IT staff N = 7</th>
<th>% of total respondents N = 67</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of language services resources (yes)</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know a Second language</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived usefulness of SLD (strongly agree/agree)</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>79.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to volunteer for a SLD (n=28)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SLD=Second Language Database
* Other Healthcare Professionals includes visiting specialist physician, allied health staff and clinical assistants.
Future Directions

• Ensuring continuity of the SLD (plan already in place)

• Follow up project to assess the effectiveness/impact of the SSLD.
Participants in the Study (N = 67 out of a possible of 100)

- Physicians: 38
- Other HCPs: 22
- Non-clinical Personnel: 7
Results - Question 2 Awareness of Resources

Those aware of resources cited:
SFHC and City of Hamilton

- SFHC is a Family Health Team based in Hamilton.

- Currently serving a population of over 17,000.

- The city of Hamilton has a population of approximately 500,000, with around one in four people being recent immigrants or refugees.

- Hamilton’s recent immigrant and refugee population continue to increase with among the highest concentration of refugees from various backgrounds in Canada.
Shared Responsibility

- Physicians were asked whether “Patients should make their own arrangements/bring their own interpreter when visiting the clinic”, and 60.5% agreed/strongly agreed with this statement.

- Our findings are consistent with previous articles (dating back to 1976) indicating Family Physicians feel patients have a shared responsibility to learn English or French in order to better adjust to life in Canada (De Buda Y. Can Fam Physician 1976).

- The Government of Canada has invested in free basic English and French Language classes such as the Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) Program.
Years of Experience among staff physicians

- >1yrs: 83.4%
- 3-5yrs: 8.3%
- >10yrs: 8.3%
Physicians, Residents and other HCPs able to speak a Second Language

* HCP: Other Healthcare Professionals and administration
Awareness of language service resources in the community
* HCPs: Other Healthcare Professionals and Administration
Participants in the Study (N = 67 out of a possible total of ~100)
Number of interactions with patients with language barriers in the past year

- 3 or more times: 54.1%
- 1-2 times: 40.5%
- Did not answer: 5.4%
Awareness of Resources to assist with language barriers

- Unaware of resources: 77.6%
- Personnel aware of Resources: 22.4%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Staff Family Physician N (%)</th>
<th>R1 Resident N (%)</th>
<th>R2 Resident N (%)</th>
<th>Other Healthcare Professionals* N (%)</th>
<th>Administration and IT staff N (%)</th>
<th>Total N %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of language services resources (yes)</td>
<td>5/12 7.5%</td>
<td>2/12 2.9%</td>
<td>4/13 5.9%</td>
<td>4/23 5.9%</td>
<td>0/7 0%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know a Second language</td>
<td>6/12 8.9%</td>
<td>6/12 8.9%</td>
<td>8/13 11.9%</td>
<td>6/23 8.9%</td>
<td>2/7 2.9%</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived usefulness of SLD (strongly agree/agree)</td>
<td>9/12 13.4%</td>
<td>10/12 14.9%</td>
<td>13/13 19.4%</td>
<td>15/23 22.4%</td>
<td>6/7 8.9%</td>
<td>79.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to volunteer for a SLD (n=28)</td>
<td>3/6 10.7%</td>
<td>5/6 17.9%</td>
<td>5/8 17.9%</td>
<td>4/6 14.3%</td>
<td>2/2 7.1%</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Responses by group related to setting up a Second Language Database and awareness of community.