



Original Research

Perceptions of Spanish-speaking clientele of patient care services in a community pharmacy

Nicole L. Olenik, Pharm.D., C.D.E.^{a,*},

Jasmine D. Gonzalvo, Pharm.D., B.C.P.S., B.C.-A.D.M., C.D.E.^{a,b},

Margie E. Snyder, Pharm.D., M.P.H.^a,

Christy L. Nash, Pharm.D., C.D.E.^c, Cory T. Smith, Pharm.D., C.D.E.^d

^aCollege of Pharmacy, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, USA

^bAmbulatory Care, Eskenazi Health, Indianapolis, IN, USA

^cCertified Health Coach, Independent Practice, Floyds Knobs, IN, USA

^dFloyd Memorial Hospital and Health Services, New Albany, IN, USA

Abstract

Background: A paucity of studies exists that have assessed community pharmacy preferences of Spanish-speaking patients living in areas of the U.S. with rapidly growing Hispanic populations. The qualitative approach to this research affords a unique opportunity to further explore perceptions of the Spanish-speaking population.

Objectives: To identify perceptions of Spanish-speaking patients living in the U.S. with a focus on the care provided in community pharmacies, as well as to determine their satisfaction with community pharmacies.

Methods: Participants were recruited after weekly Spanish-speaking church services for approximately one month. Qualitative, semi-structured individual interviews to identify perceived unmet patient care needs were conducted in Spanish and transcribed/translated verbatim. Qualitative thematic analysis was used to summarize findings. A written questionnaire was administered to collect patient satisfaction and demographic information, summarized using descriptive statistics.

Results: Twelve interviews were conducted by the principal investigator. Primary themes included lack of insurance coupled with high medical care costs serving as a barrier for acquisition of health care, difficulty accessing timely and convenient primary care, perceived negative attitudes from pharmacy personnel, lack of Spanish-speaking health care providers, and the provision of verbal and written medication information in English.

Conclusions: The results of this study suggest a great need for health care providers, including pharmacists, to expand outreach services to the Spanish-speaking community. Some examples derived from the interview process include increasing marketing efforts of available services in the Spanish language, hiring Spanish-speaking personnel, and offering medical terminology education classes to Spanish-speaking patients.

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* Corresponding author. Mathes Pharmacy and Diabetes Center, 1621 Charlestown Road, New Albany, IN 47150, USA. Tel.: +1 812 944 3612; fax: +1 812 941 7303.

E-mail address: moore337@purdue.edu (N.L. Olenik).

Introduction

The Spanish-speaking population has been growing rapidly in the U.S., and this trend is expected to continue. Between the years 2000 and 2010, the growth rate of the Hispanic community (43%) was more than four times the growth rate of the total population (10%).¹ The estimation of the Hispanic population by the US Census Bureau in 2010 was nearly 1 million more than expected, based on the most recent Census Bureau estimates.² In the year 2000, the Hispanic population in the United States was approximately 12.5 million people. By the year 2050, the population is estimated to nearly *double* to 24.4 million people.³

In 2006, it was estimated that nearly 222,000 people in Indiana primarily speak Spanish at home, out of a total population of approximately 6.5 million people.⁴ It has been recognized that the level of care Spanish-speaking patients receive in a pharmacy reflects their level of English literacy.⁵ Although resources are available to many pharmacists to provide patient education materials in Spanish, these are being underutilized due to inconsistent and potentially harmful translations. Computer programs utilized to convert medicine labels from English to Spanish have been found to include incomplete translations resulting in a mixture of English and Spanish, misspellings and grammatical errors. For example, if the word “once,” which is also the word for “eleven” in Spanish, was left untranslated from English to Spanish on a medication label, a patient may be led to believe that he or she should take the medication eleven times a day instead of once per day.⁶ This, coupled with the established need for more pharmacists who can speak Spanish, means that even if patients receive these materials in their native language, any follow-up questions or concerns are unlikely to be verbalized adequately to the patient.⁷ In a recent study conducted in 2011, 78.4% of community pharmacists in the U.S. believed that the ability to communicate with Spanish-speaking patients is important.⁸ Furthermore, a survey performed in North Carolina found the overall attitudes of pharmacists toward working with the Spanish-speaking community to be positive.⁵

A paucity of studies exists that have assessed perceptions of patient care services in community pharmacy by Spanish-speaking patients living in locations in the U.S. with rapidly growing Hispanic populations. A recent study in North

Carolina evaluated Latino patients’ preferences for medication information and pharmacy services. Study investigators called for further research to perform an examination of Spanish-speaking patients’ preferences in other regions of the U.S.⁹ An assessment of health care needs of the Spanish-speaking population in the Midwest, in which there is a rapidly growing Hispanic community, has not been done.⁷ Additionally, a study measuring patient satisfaction with community pharmacy in the U.S., specific to the Spanish-speaking population, has not been published previously. Databases utilized to research this topic included PubMed/Medline, Iowa Drug Information Service (IDIS) and EBSCO. Search terms include “Spanish AND pharmacy,” “Hispanic AND pharmacy,” “Spanish-speaking patients,” “Spanish health care community,” “pharmacist outreach to Spanish-speaking patients” and “Hispanic community utilization of pharmacies.” The qualitative approach to the current research affords a unique opportunity to further explore these perceptions.

Methods

Objective

The primary objectives of this study are to determine the perceptions of the Spanish-speaking community of patient care services in a community pharmacy setting, as well as to assess patient satisfaction with community pharmacies.

Design

In-depth, semi-structured, qualitative interviews were utilized to determine Spanish-speaking participants’ needs in relation to pharmaceutical care. The primary investigator was designated to perform each of the interviews. Each question in the interview guide was discussed prior to implementation with a Spanish-speaking registered nurse who works closely with the Spanish-speaking population at the Church. Six practice sessions were conducted amongst the study investigators, first in English then in Spanish, to refine the interview guide and interviewing techniques. The interviewer received constructive feedback in terms of how to handle potential obstacles and conduct neutral probes during an interview from investigators who have had extensive experience conducting qualitative interviews. Each interview was conducted in Spanish by a single study investigator in a

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