

Linguistic sensitivity and access to health and social services in French

Training for the project REVIVRE!
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GReFoPS

Groupe de recherche sur la formation professionnelle en
santé et service social en contexte francophone minoritaire



Objectives

- Access to health and social services in French
- Active Offer
- What it means during your volunteer experience



A bit of history



1969
La Loi sur le
fête ses **40 ans!**

venue
come

Francophones in Canada

Portraits des
CFSM

Province or territories	Population	French speakers	French as 1st language
<i>Canada</i>	33 476 688	9 960 590	7 691 705
T-N et labrador	514 536	23 580	2 100
I-P-E	140 204	17 135	4 810
N-E	921 727	94 310	30 330
N-B	751 171	312 270	235 695
Ontario	12 851 821	1 438 785	542 390
Manitoba	1 208 268	104 630	41 365
Saskatchewan	1 033 381	47 000	14 290
Alberta	3 645 257	238 770	71 370
C-B	4 400 057	298 695	62 195
Yukon	33 891	4 505	1 485
T-N-O	41 462	3 760	1 080
Nunavut	31 906	1 240	480
Total outside of Québec	25 573 681	2 584 680	1 007 590

Statistique Canada, 2012, 2013

Creation of 2 organizations



Société **Santé**
en français

Ensure better access to French language health programs and services, and to improve the overall health of minority francophone and Acadian communities.



**Consortium national
de formation en santé**

Support institutions offering health training programs, and support research on the health of minority francophone communities.

Video testimonies



Last year, on Monday, August 16th, my brother
woke up to discover that his skin had a yellowish tint...
Ronald Bisson

Video testimonies



Reflections

- 1) What are your reactions after having heard these testimonies?
- 2) How can such situations be prevented?
- 3) What are the possible connections between language and patient safety?

What is « Active Offer »?

A proactive approach

Offering a patient the possibility of speaking in his/her official language of choice so that he/she doesn't have to request it.

Providers and organisations:

- make french-language services visible, available and easily accessible
- inform patients that they can receive timely, high quality care in both official languages
- apply this approach throughout the full continuum of care

Why « Active Offer »?

- After decades without access to health or social services in French, people are under the impression that those services are not available (Société Santé en français, 2007).
- A person who doesn't ask for a service in French, even when she knows it exists, is often not aware of the language's importance, or she has doubts about the services.
- Francophone patients can have insecurities regarding their first language (regional accent, local slang...).
- When feeling vulnerable or sick, a person may lose his ability in his second language.

How to demonstrate « Active Offer »?

- Specific actions and behaviors:
 - 1) Build a quality relationship with the patient acting with empathy, authenticity, respect and transparency.
 - 2) Communicate the respect we have for the equitable access to health care or services.
 - 3) Upon initial contact, ask the patient what his/her preferred language of communication is.
- Measures:
 - 1) Visual identification of the bilingual staff, wearing the “Bonjour-Hello” badge.
 - 2) Publication and exposition of documents in a bilingual format.
 - 3) Adding the patient’s preferred language in his/her file.

Language and health – quality of the services

- 50 to 55% of Francophones living in a minority context **never, or almost never**, had access to **health care services in French**, whether it was in a private clinic, in a Hospital, in a community health center, or other (Comité consultatif des communautés francophones en situation minoritaire, 2007).
- “Language was described as the most necessary tool to have success in the practice. **If there was no language involved, the doctors’ work would almost be identical to the veterinarian.**” (Bowen, 2001)
- **Language barriers and cultural differences** can lead the **linguistic minority groups** to under use the services in place. (Bowen, 2001)

Language and health – quality of the services

- Language as an element of quality:
 - 1) The evaluation of the overall health is more precise.
 - 2) The received treatment often leads to an interpersonal interaction, which improves the therapeutic relationship and brings positive results.
 - 3) The patient has a better understanding of the treatment plan, and is more likely willing to respect it.
 - 4) Patients are more satisfied.

Language and health – patient safety

- **70% of the information** health professionals use to make a diagnosis come directly from the patient's perception or description of the situation (Bowen, 2001).
- In the case of miscommunication:
 - 1) Increase in diagnostic and treatment errors
 - 2) Increase in the number of evaluations
 - 3) Increase in the risk of professional misconduct
 - 4) Delay in care, or avoidance of care.

Language and health – patient safety

- As future health care professionals, by including Active offer in your practice, you are promoting the patient's safety with:
 - 1) Better evaluation of the patient's overall health
 - 2) Quicker and more precise diagnosis
 - 3) Enhanced adherence to treatment
 - 4) More positive results
 - 5) Better patient satisfaction

Case Studies

- What are the consequences of miscommunication in healthcare?
- How does miscommunication affect the patient's safety?
- What could health professionals do in a similar situation?



While you are volunteering

- **What could you do to facilitate communication with the resident?**
- See with the resident what his or her preferred language of communication is.
- Learn if the resident can use both official languages depending on the context.
- Is your resident bilingual? Is he/she bilingual in all types of situations?
- Are there some situations where people are talking to him/her in English/French? How does your resident react?
- Have you noticed some expressions or level of language of your resident? How could you adapt your language to that level?
- How do you make sure you understand what your resident is saying, when she is/he's using unfamiliar expressions?

The Active Offer Tool Box

- www.offreactive.com



THANK YOU!

Happy volunteering!

