



Evaluating the Cultural Competence of Asthma Educational Materials

Racial/ethnic minorities are the fastest growing groups in the United States. One out of every three US children is non-white, and it is estimated that by the year 2025, half of all US children will be non-white.ⁱ

In Wisconsin, racial/ethnic minority groups increased an average of 16% to 107% during the past decade compared to a 5% increase in non-Hispanic whites.ⁱⁱ Such rapid growth in racial/ethnic diversity makes it increasingly likely that healthcare providers and educators will encounter individuals from different cultures and language groups in their practice settings.ⁱⁱⁱ

The dramatic surge in Wisconsin's diversity has amplified the importance of providing culturally competent and linguistically appropriate healthcare. Cultural competency is defined as recognition of and appropriate response to key cultural features that affect health care.^{iv} A growing body of literature documents the impact of culture and language on clinical care, including healthcare processes and outcomes, quality of care, and patient satisfaction.^v Failure to consider a patient's cultural and linguistic issues can result in a variety of adverse consequences, including (but not limited to) miscommunication, poor continuity of care, decreased access to care, use of harmful remedies, and receipt of fewer prescriptions.

In Wisconsin, 11% of non-Hispanic (NH) African Americans and Hispanics and 9% of NH Native Americans reported ever being diagnosed with asthma from 1997-2000 compared to 7% of non-Hispanic whites. The asthma hospitalization rate among African Americans was about six times higher than the rate among whites from 1990-2002. The African American asthma mortality rate was also much higher at 61.5 deaths per million compared to 16.5 deaths per million in the white population from 1990-2001.^{vi}

Printed asthma educational materials are an important means by which families are educated about asthma and its management. Asthma educational materials should address the unique language and cultural concerns of racial/ethnic groups. Language and cultural barriers need to be identified and overcome to pave the way for better communication of information.

The Medical College of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Asthma Coalition (WAC) Disparities Workgroup have developed a tool to evaluate the cultural competence of printed asthma educational materials. The tool is designed to set a standard of care, score asthma educational materials by this standard, and provide suggestions for improvement to these materials. Results will be shared with WAC partners to help improve the development of asthma educational materials used with racial/ethnic groups in Wisconsin.



References

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ⁱⁱ Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Division of Public Health, Minority Health Program. *The Health of Racial and Ethnic Populations in Wisconsin: 1996-2000* (PPH 0281 07/04). Madison, Wisconsin: Department of Health and Family Services, 2004.

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^{iv} Flores G. Culture and the physician-patient relationship: achieving cultural competency in health care. *J Pediatr* 2000;136:14-23.

^v Flores G, Rabke-Verani J, Pine W, Sabharwal A. The importance of cultural and linguistic issues in the emergency care of children. *Pediatr Emerg Care* 2002;18:271-84.

^{vi} Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Division of Public Health, Bureau of Environmental Health. *Burden of Asthma in Wisconsin: 2004* (PPH 45055 03/04). Madison, Wisconsin: Department of Health and Family Services, 2004.