

Attitudes of Vietnamese Americans Concerning Communication Disorders

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Health care professionals are increasingly challenged when providing patient-centered care for individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as the demographics continue to change in the United States. This is uniquely challenging for professionals providing care to persons with communication needs. In this study, a survey was conducted to assess the attitudes of Vietnamese Americans concerning communication disorders.

Method: Survey responses of 73 participants from Vietnamese backgrounds were analyzed according to three adult age ranges: youngest (18-20 years), middle (21-27 years), and oldest (32 years and older). Questions were asked to determine possible attitudes toward (1) communication disorders and (2) potential hindrances in seeking services for communication disorders. Ten questions were utilized to survey participants' attitudes toward communication disorders. A total attitude score was calculated by averaging the means of the ten questions. Three questions were used to survey possible hindrances in seeking health care and a total hindrance score was calculated. Descriptive and comparative statistics were used for comparisons of participants' attitudes.

Results: Total attitude scores across all three age groups revealed generally positive attitudes regarding communication disorders. Statistical testing revealed that the middle age group had significantly more positive attitudes than the oldest group concerning specific attitudes (e.g., individuals with speech disorders should not be ridiculed, are not less intelligent, and should not be hidden from other people). Results on the hindrance questions indicated that there were significant differences between the oldest participants and the other two groups. The youngest and middle groups responded similarly, stating that financial, ethnic identity, and language barriers did not deter them from seeking health care services for communication disorders; however, the oldest group indicated that these factors might be barriers.

Conclusions: There is a need for health professionals to be knowledgeable in order to appropriately serve clients from diverse backgrounds. In this study, individuals from Vietnamese backgrounds tended toward more positive attitudes toward communication disorders. In addition, the oldest group noted that there may be barriers to receiving health care services for communication disorders. With this study, professionals may have an increased understanding and knowledge when providing care to individuals and families from Vietnamese backgrounds.