

Customer Service:

Spanish Program to Enhance Therapy Services by Carlos Güereca

Introduction

At Heritage Square there was a communication gap caused by a language barrier between the staff and some of our residents. On many occasions our facility has admitted residents that speak a language other than English. There have been Spanish speakers, Polish speakers, Serbian and Bosnian speakers. Being a Spanish speaker, I saw this as an opportunity to help improve the services of the facility.

Knowledge of Task

The majority of the therapy staff at Heritage Square is not fluent in Spanish; therefore, the therapists struggle to communicate and treat monolingual Spanish speakers. All ten of the therapists who participated agreed that communication with Spanish speaking residents is a challenge. Common practices for our therapists include using pictures to communicate, as well as demonstrating exercises in front of the resident. The goal of this project was to develop a tool that would aide and improve the Therapy Department's ability to communicate with patients that only speak Spanish.

Methodology

To accomplish this project, therapist participation was vital. This included the following four steps:

1. Shadowing therapists
2. Utilizing an initial questionnaire
3. Individual one-on-one conversations with therapists
4. A post-project questionnaire critiquing a prototype.

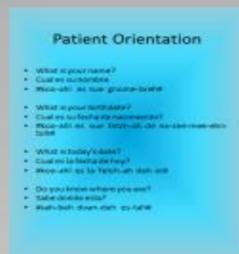
. When asked what tools would be beneficial to face this challenge, the most common suggestions were the following:

- 5 Therapists suggested a written tool that could be used to translate common words or phrases.
- 3 Therapists suggested finding an application that could be used on their iPads to translate.

Continuous feedback from individual therapists was essential, allowing me to specialize this tool even more.

The tool developed was a booklet with a Therapist copy and a Resident copy. The booklet was divided into four sections and included words and phrases specific to therapy. These words and phrases were then translated and also "transcribed." This transcription was more of a manipulation of English words and sounds to represent the pronunciation of a Spanish word, not a true phonetic transcription.

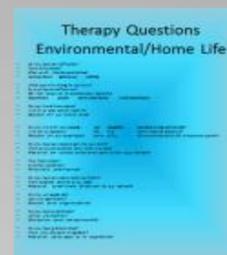
Patient Orientation



Therapy Treatment Questions



Treatment Questions- Environment and Home Life



Cues

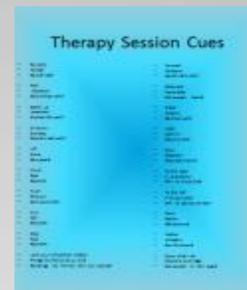
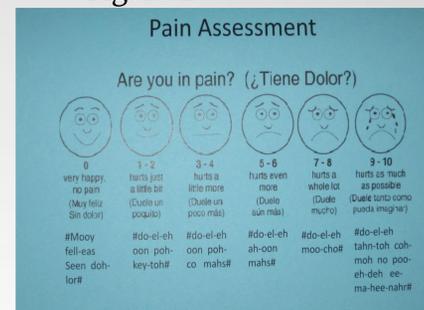


Figure 1.

How many steps?
Cuantos escalones?
#Kwan-tohs es-kah-loan-es#

Figure 2.



(Wong-Baker pain assessment)

This technique was used with all the words and phrases included in the Therapist copy of the booklet. See examples in figures 1. and 2.

Included in the therapist copy is a list of iPad friendly Spanish resources accessible through the company issued tablets.

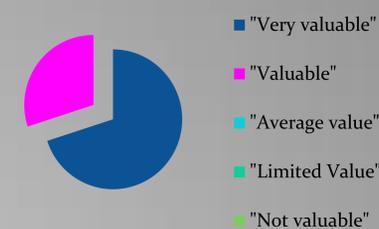
A Resident copy is provided as a visual aid for the patient. This copy of the booklet does not include the modified transcriptions, and therefore allows for larger print in English and Spanish.

Summary of Success

The tool developed was received well by the therapy team. According to responses to the post-project questionnaire, this is a simple and easy to use tool.

- 70% of the therapists rated this tool as being "very valuable," with 30% deeming it "valuable."

Rated Value of Spanish Booklet by Facility Therapists



- 100% of the therapists surveyed agreed that this tool would help them communicate better with Spanish speaking residents.
- All the therapists surveyed agreed that this tool enhances their abilities.

Recommendations

To gain a comfort and familiarity, I would recommend that the therapists practice reading the material before applying it. To improve this tool, I suggest continuously observing it's use with patients and monitoring it's efficacy. This method of easing communication can be applied to other therapy teams, but it may require some personalization to each facility and to the target population.

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