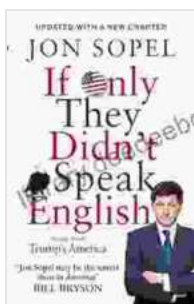


# If Only They Didn't Speak English: The Hidden Challenges of Language Barriers in Healthcare

Language barriers are a significant challenge in healthcare. Patients who do not speak English may have difficulty communicating their symptoms, understanding their diagnosis, and following their treatment plan. This can lead to errors in diagnosis and treatment, medication adherence problems, and lower patient satisfaction.

The problem of language barriers is particularly acute in the United States, where one in five people speaks a language other than English at home. This number is expected to grow to one in three people by 2060.

Language barriers can have a profound impact on the quality of healthcare. Studies have shown that patients who do not speak English are more likely to:



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**America** by Jon Sopel

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 4318 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
X-Ray : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Print length : 366 pages



- Experience delays in diagnosis and treatment
- Receive lower-quality care
- Be less satisfied with their care
- Have difficulty following their treatment plan
- Be hospitalized more often
- Die from preventable causes

Language barriers can also lead to errors in diagnosis and treatment. For example, a study of patients with diabetes found that those who did not speak English were more likely to have their blood sugar levels misdiagnosed. This can lead to serious complications, such as blindness, kidney failure, and amputation.

There are a number of strategies that can be used to overcome language barriers in healthcare. These include:

- **Using interpreters:** Interpreters can help patients communicate with their healthcare providers. They can provide interpretation for both verbal and written communication.
- **Using translated materials:** Translated materials can help patients understand their diagnosis, treatment plan, and other health information.
- **Providing language classes:** Language classes can help patients learn English so that they can communicate with their healthcare

providers directly.

- **Training healthcare providers in cultural competence:** Cultural competence training can help healthcare providers understand the cultural and linguistic needs of their patients.

Language barriers are a significant challenge in healthcare. They can lead to errors in diagnosis and treatment, medication adherence problems, and lower patient satisfaction. There are a number of strategies that can be used to overcome language barriers in healthcare, including using interpreters, translated materials, language classes, and training healthcare providers in cultural competence.

By investing in these strategies, we can help to ensure that all patients receive the high-quality healthcare they deserve, regardless of their language.

- [The National Council on Interpreting in Healthcare](#)
- [The Joint Commission](#)
- [The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#)
- [The National Institutes of Health](#)



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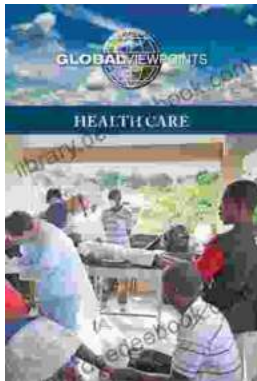
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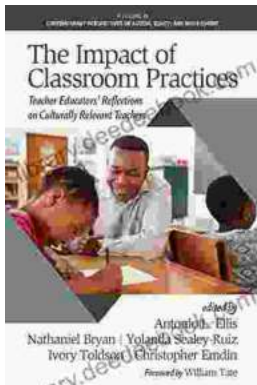
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