

# **ARE WE HARD OF HEARING WHEN IT COMES TO CARING FOR DEAF PATIENTS? NURSES' ATTITUDES TOWARD DEAFNESS**

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## **Background**

Approximately 4 million people or about 4.1% of the population of the U.S. are considered functionally deaf or hard of hearing. Deaf individuals require healthcare services with the same frequency and for the same issues as hearing clients. Deaf people face unique challenges when navigating healthcare services such as a lack of appropriate communication and educational materials. Nurses' attitudes toward d/Deafness, knowledge of Deaf culture, deficits in knowledge have the potential to limit nurses in providing culturally sensitive and appropriate care to d/Deaf/HOH patients.

## **Objective**

Nurses will have a working knowledge of Deaf culture, an increased understanding of the unique needs of the d/Deaf/hoh patient and be better able to adapt their care to meet those needs.

## **Implementation**

A descriptive study of over 225 RN's in a large metropolitan hospital system provided the data to guide development of an educational presentation introducing Deaf cultural beliefs/practices and information on communicating with and making accommodation for their needs in everyday practice along with resources for reference. Presentations were given to nurses and students across all specialties.

## **Statement of Practice**

A year and half after the educational sessions were done nurses express a greater comfort with caring for these patients are more likely to access resources to provide appropriate communication/education.

## **Implication for Practice**

Nursing has a unique challenge in caring for these patients but, with increased knowledge of this cultural group, an opportunity to implement new, innovative methods to communicate with the d/hoh patient to meet their specific physical and educational needs.