Abstract

During the academic year 1997–1998, a needs analysis was conducted on the Minneapolis campus of the College of St. Catherine, to determine why many of the ESL students enrolled in the Associate of Science (A.S.) degree nursing program were not succeeding academically. Several procedures, primarily interviews, observations, and questionnaires, were used to gather information about the objective needs of the students, all of whom are immigrants. The course Speaking and Listening in a Health-Care Setting was developed to respond to what was identified as students’ area of greatest difficulty: communicating with clients and colleagues in the clinical
setting. The content of the course is divided into four units: assertiveness skills, therapeutic communication, information-gathering techniques, and the role of culture in health-care communication. A variety of methods and materials, drawn primarily from sources for developing health-care communication skills in native speakers, is used to actively engage students in the learning process, with particular emphasis on role plays. The course has been very successful in helping students learn how to communicate more effectively in clinical settings. By helping culturally and linguistically diverse students succeed in their programs, the course is also helping to bring much needed diversity to the health-care professions in the United States.

Keywords
ESP and medicine; Cultural differences; Immigrants; Refugees

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