

Kristin Lynn and Angela Leonardo are students of physical therapy and Spanish at Ithaca College. During the time of the independent study, Lynn was in the third year while Leonardo was in the fourth year of the physical therapy program. At this time they were entering the professional phase of the program. Before entering the clinic to work with Spanish-speaking patients, the students felt they needed more knowledge about the treatment of this population. After taking many grammar- and literature-based Spanish classes, the two decided to join their interests with the goal of being able to treat a more diverse population in their careers.

Leonardo and Lynn learned about cultural competency and how it applies to physical therapy. They hoped to develop the cultural competency to work respectfully and professionally with the target population of Spanish-speaking patients. The students wanted to increase their consciousness of the expectations and needs of this population and learn about resources and procedures to help Spanish-speaking patients receive the treatment that they need in a welcoming and comforting environment.

An essential aspect of patient care is the relationship between patient and healthcare provider. This presentation discusses the concept of cultural competency in addition to specific aspects related to treating Spanish-speaking patients. It is unrealistic to expect any one resource to address all of the cultural aspects of treating this population, but this presentation will try to present the most relevant and applicable aspects for the profession of physical therapy.

The independent study included three main parts: the analysis of literature, the study of anatomy in Spanish and interviews with medical professionals who have experience working with Spanish-speaking populations. To begin, the students started familiarizing themselves with the health system in the United States and the state of cultural competency in relation to the Latino population. This information was used to formulate general interview questions. Additionally, this endeavor helped to decipher areas for further investigation. The literature provided current and sometimes controversial topics to discuss with the interviewees, such as the inequality of medical treatment between different ethnic groups in the United States. The interviews were the most relevant to the students' future careers. They allowed them to learn about real experiences from people who actually work in the health care system rather than just reading theory. The interviews also helped refute or confirm the literature.

It is hoped that this document helps in the practice of physical therapy or at least expands perspectives on what it means to provide quality medical assistance to Spanish-speaking patients.