

## Sign language: a learning opportunity from medical sciences

Lenguaje de señas: una oportunidad de aprendizaje desde las ciencias médicas

Linguagem gestual: uma oportunidade de aprendizagem nas ciências médicas

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Received: 06-13-2024 Accepted: 13-05-2024 Published: 28-07-2024

### How to cite this article:

Garbey Pascual Y, Despaigne Pérez C. **Sign language: a learning opportunity from medical sciences**. Rev Inf Cient [Internet]. 2024 [cited day month year]; 103:e4610. Available in: <http://www.revinfcientifica.sld.cu/index.php/ric/article/view/4610>

Dear Editor:

The advance towards a social transformation where higher education plays a fundamental role based on the principles of quality and sustainability has the purpose of finding effective and innovative solutions to the problems that arise today, hence it is supported by goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that addresses the guide to achieve sustainable development in the face of the need to ensure inclusive and equitable education to promote learning opportunities for all.<sup>(1)</sup>

In this sense, Cuban higher medical education needs to train creative, innovative professionals who develop other qualities such as being good communicators, who learn to provide humanized and quality care to healthy, sick and disabled people, which constitutes new ways of dealing with social demands, an aspect that is paradigmatic in the training of health professionals.

The Cuban state, institutions and organizations in society give priority attention to persons with disabilities in social, public and cultural services, allowing them to develop skills and attitudes so that they can exercise their rights on an equal footing with the rest of the population. In 2023, the Cuban Association of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities was constituted, and the bases for the Law on Disability are currently being drafted; in 2024, Cuban Sign Language will be legally recognized as an expression of their cultural identity and as a natural language of the deaf community.



Sign language is the first natural and mother tongue of deaf people and the fundamental means for their cognitive, linguistic and communicative development. This language is the symbol and heritage of the deaf community, which identifies them with their culture in linguistic contact with the hearing community, which is an expression of an intercultural education.<sup>(2)</sup>

Communication through sign language is a useful and vital tool for providing excellent care. In the training of students in the medical sciences, and specifically in the science of nursing, it is necessary that during the course of study, theoretical and practical knowledge addresses the communicative aspects related to people with hearing impairment, so that sign language skills are acquired; in this sense, it is necessary to incorporate this knowledge into the training process.

During the teaching and learning process, the student must acquire a great deal of knowledge in order to be able to transform society through various forms of knowledge. When the integration of knowledge from various disciplines is assumed, the integral formation of the student is strengthened from the instructional, educational and developmental point of view. In order to achieve quality in education, the interaction of knowledge with common objectives and interests of various disciplines is necessary.

By inserting sign language in the training process, students of medical sciences would strengthen their scientific preparation in this field, as well as a better humanistic training, with the achievement of communicative competences, as there are moments in which this type of patient needs it. In their work, nurses use communication, which must be clear and adequate to achieve safe care in different contexts: in primary health care; before, during and after preparation for surgical procedures; in the event of an emergency or urgency; at times when they are not accompanied by family members.

The university, as an agent of social transformation and sustainable development, has the responsibility to strengthen the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of its processes. In the Nursing degree, the guiding discipline outlines interpersonal communication strategies where all the contents converge in the nurse-patient relationship, and this is where the communication process is specifically developed. This process is sometimes made difficult in the case of patients with communication disabilities if the patient in the health centre is not accompanied by a family member or an interpreter, a fact that can have a negative influence on correct communication in the exercise of the profession.

Nurses are key members of the health care team, as they spend most of their time at the patient's bedside, providing care to the individual, the family and the community. Demonstrating mastery and developing communication skills favors a climate of trust and empathy which is essential for establishing communication without barriers in the different spheres of action, hence the need to master a second language in order to achieve effective interpersonal communication between nurse, patient and family, for a speedy recovery and incorporation of the patient into his or her social environment.



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### Declaration of conflicts of interest:

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

### Financing:

No funding was received for the development of this article.

