Communication Skills
for Health Professionals Project 2011

Final Report
Executive Summary
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Executive Summary

Background
The aim of the Communication Skills for Health Professionals (CSHP) project at Mount Royal University Languages Institute (MRU) is to improve the language and communication skills of internationally educated health professionals (IEHPs) for them in order to
- access bridging programs specific to their professional discipline, such as the Bridge to Canadian Nursing program, Multi-jurisdictional Midwifery Bridging Program, Medical Communication Assessment Project;
- enhance their employment options; and / or
- take competency exams in their field, such as the Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Exam Part 2 (MCCQE2), National Assessment Collaboration Objective Structured Clinical Exam (NAC OSCE), and the Substantially Equivalent Competency (SEC) Assessment.

In 2010, MRU delivered the Alberta pilot of the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development developed “Professional Communication for Internationally Educated Health Professionals” curriculum with Alberta Employment and Immigration funding. Following the pilot, MRU rebranded the course, introduced tuition fees, and opened registration to international students to create a sustainable model for future delivery.

In 2011, Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) funded a number of places on the course for eligible applicants with Permanent Resident status. Funding covered the costs of tuition, course materials, and transportation (Fall term only) as well as the position of the project coordinator. The CSHP project was delivered on campus in two phases centred around full time face-to-face 13-week course deliveries in the Spring and Fall terms.

The Participants
From a total of 27 course participants, 25 were eligible for a CIC funded place. Participants were selected based on:
- Their level of English language proficiency (CLBA L/S 7, R 6, W 6 or equivalent IELTS or TOEFL).
- Their professional experience.
- Their personal and professional goals.
- Their ability to attend a full time 13 week course.

The beneficiaries represented 15 countries of origin. They were on average 35 years of age, and the majority had lived in Canada for up to 3 years. 48% of the participants were physicians, 44% were nurses, and 8% were midwives.

Project Goals
The CSHP project has accountably met its aim of improving the language proficiency and communication skills of IEHPs by:
- Providing a course that implements a performance based curriculum over a sufficient period of time (270 hours) for participants to significantly increase their language proficiency and communicative competence.
- Tracking the growth of language proficiency through an Institutional CELBAN pre-and post-assessment.
- Advising, counseling, supporting participants through networking opportunities.
- Tracking participants’ career paths after the end of the course.

**Measured Outcomes**
The outcomes of the CSHP project were measured through:
- Gains in language proficiency as measured through pre and post-assessment.
- The participants’ perceptions of the course and its impact on their personal advancement towards professional practice.
- Results of professional integration related to placements in bridging programs, the attainment of full or part time employment, and/or taking competency exams.

**Measured Gains in Language Proficiency**

![Graph showing language proficiency gains](graph.png)

The results show that gains were made in language proficiency in all skills. The average gains in Reading and in Writing are 0.4 benchmarks. A smaller gain was shown in Speaking (0.3 benchmark) and a much larger gain in Listening (0.8 benchmark). Overall, 100% of beneficiaries increased their proficiency in one or more skills: 1 skill = 20%; 2 skills = 24%; 3 skills = 40%; 4 skills = 16%. The effect of these gains is significant in terms of an accelerated rate of language acquisition.

**Participant Perceptions**
The results of end of term surveys reflect the participants’ complete satisfaction with CSHP and their language and communication skills development in terms of achieving their goals and of transferring their learning to daily life.
Results of Professional Integration
Within a 2 to 7 month period following CSHP, 100% of participants had accessed further professional training and a variety of study programs, 60% were employed full or part time, and/or 28% had taken or were preparing to take competency exams in their field.

Conclusion
The 2011 CSHP Project has been a successful learning experience for all its participants. They made gains in their professional language proficiency and demonstrated their confidence in transitioning into further training, employment, and/or the licensure process. The performance based instructional model was highly effective in bringing about these learning outcomes. Evidence now exists that role play simulation, which is central to the curriculum, is an extremely valuable learning tool. CIC support for CSHP has been essential to the project’s success and will enable the institution to continue providing a service of great value to IEHPs from medicine, midwifery and nursing in future.
Learner Impact Statements

The following quotes demonstrate the impact of CSHP, and at the same time provide a powerful rationale for the project.

*The CSHP course provided me an excellent opportunity to improve my language and communication skills necessary for successful integration into the Canadian healthcare system. The 13 weeks long course has a highly organized performance-based structure that covers all the important aspects of language requirements and communication skills and provides the chance to interact with other HPs from all over the world. All the activities which are taught and practiced in the class proved extremely useful for me that increased my confidence. Specially, I consider the filmed performances with a simulation patient as an integral part of the course which proved an important tool for our self-assessment. The instant feedback from the simulation patient, the language instructor, the HP consultant and then from the classmates let me know about my strengths and weaknesses and the valuable chance to improve myself as a successful healthcare professional in the Canadian context.*

Almas Khattak, International Medical Graduate

*This program is very helpful to me and I advise that every internationally educated health professional will try to avail themselves to this course. I was exposed to the Canadian healthcare system and was equipped with the do’s and don’ts in the health care professions in Canada. I am happy that I was part of this program because I am more confident to practice and communicate in my field, either nursing or midwifery.*

Chinyere Mbachu, Internationally Educated Nurse and Midwife

*This course helped me in many ways. My communication skills are improved, not only in terms of health. This course also helped me to be more culturally sensitive and be more aware of my cultural biases. I feel more confident now to talk in English. The teaching tools that this course has really work. The filming rehearsals help me to look more natural, confident and professionals when I interview a patient, Now, I have a clear view about my accreditation process. In addition, I am more aware about my strengths and weaknesses. Now, I know what I need to do for achieve my goals.*

Monica Rodriguez, International Medical Graduate