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Enhancing Provider Confidence in Communicating with Patients with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) through Patient Letters

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Introduction

- Effective communication in health care is crucial, especially for patients with limited English proficiency (LEP). Patients with LEP face barriers regarding accessing and understanding medical information, which results in poor health outcomes and increased use of health care [1].
- Previous studies have highlighted that problems related to miscommunication, dissatisfaction, and poor compliance with their recommended treatment protocol have been documented due to language barriers [2][3]. Providers also consistently struggle with problems such as inability to access professional interpreters, translation accuracy issues, and not enough knowledge of being culturally sensitive [4].

Objectives

1. Elaborate on healthcare providers' confidence in using patient letters for patients with LEP to learn ways to increase communication strategies and health outcomes.
2. Identify key challenges and strategies for improving communication with patients who have limited English proficiency using tools such as patient letters.

Methods

A cross-sectional survey was conducted using REDCap to collect quantitative and qualitative data from healthcare providers. The survey included questions on demographics, physician confidence, communication practices, and challenges. Data analysis was performed using GraphPad Prism software v10, employing paired t-tests to compare confidence and evaluation levels across different demographics and practice settings.

Results

Familiarity Providing Patient Letters to LEP Patients

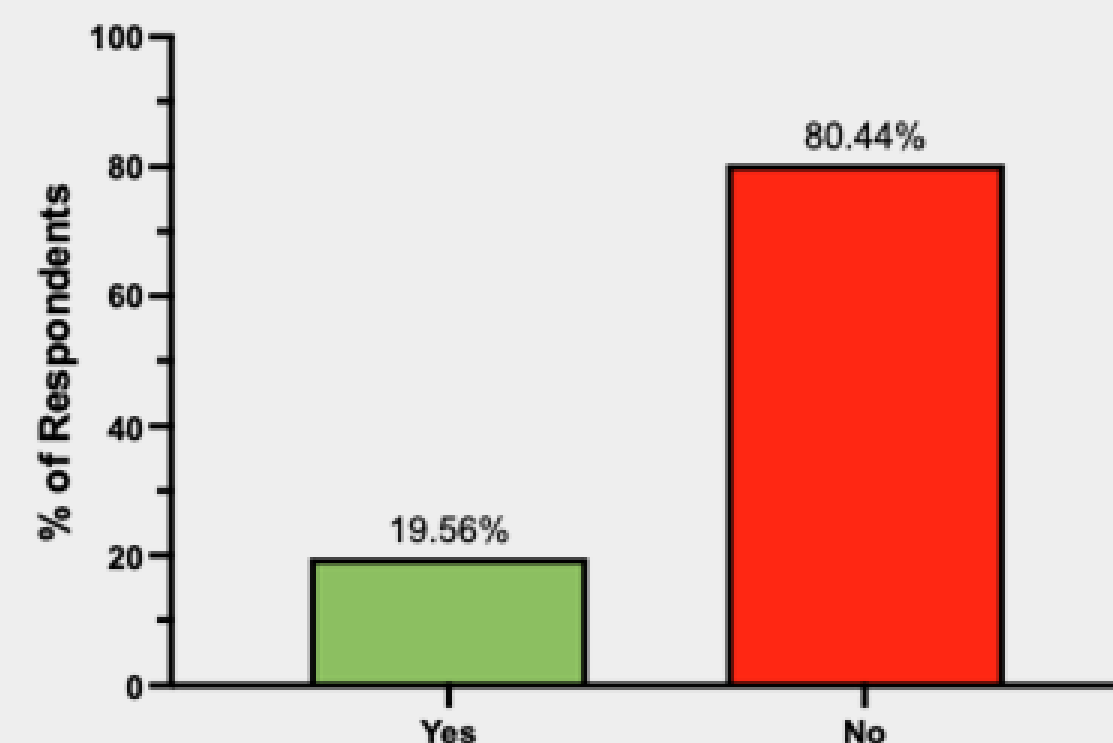


Figure 1: A significant majority indicated they were not familiar.

Provider Confidence in Communicating via Patient Letters Based on Frequency of Interaction with LEP Patients

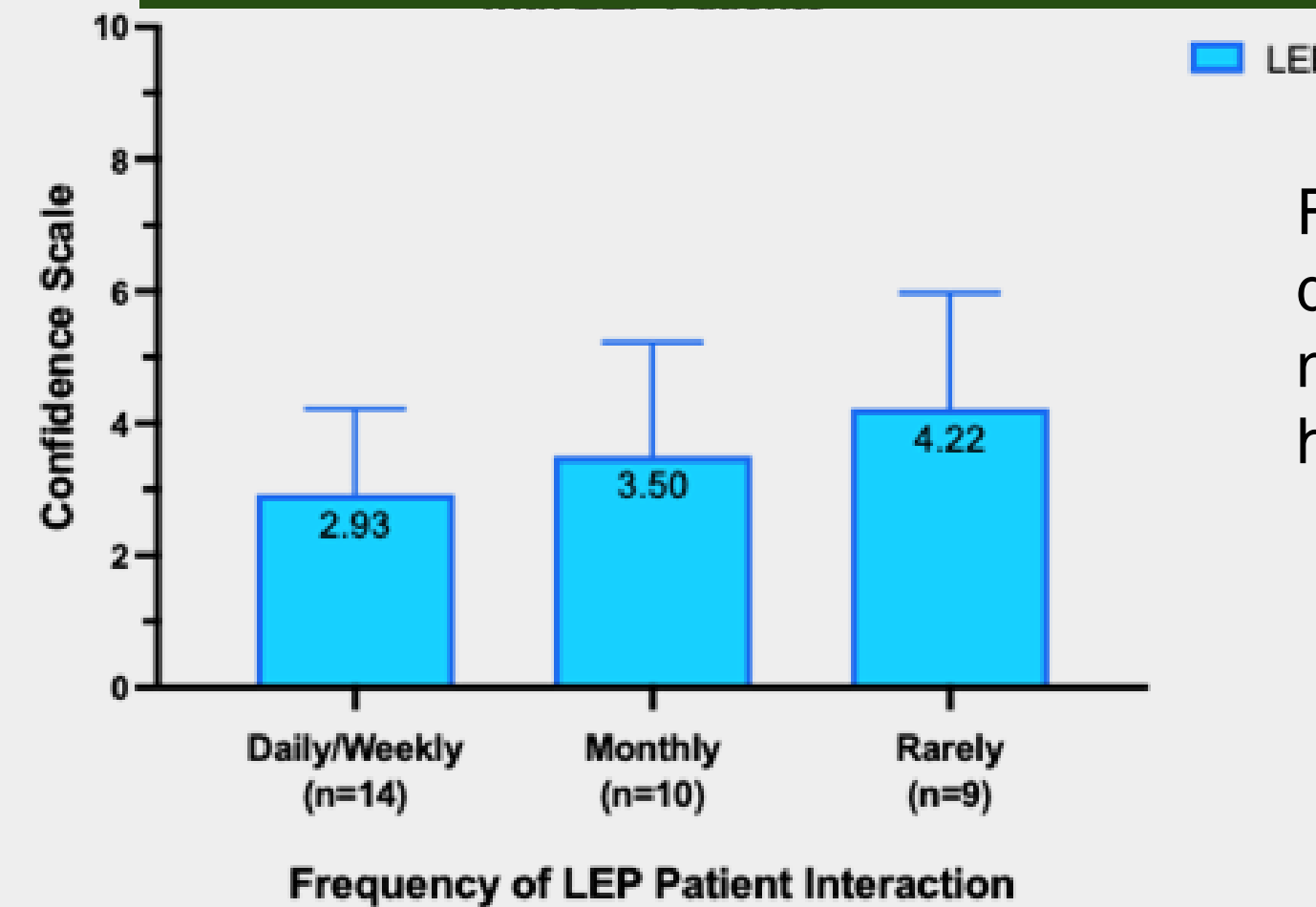


Figure 2: More frequent direct interaction does not correlate with higher confidence.

Incidence of Challenges Faced by Providers in Delivering Patient Letters to LEP Patients

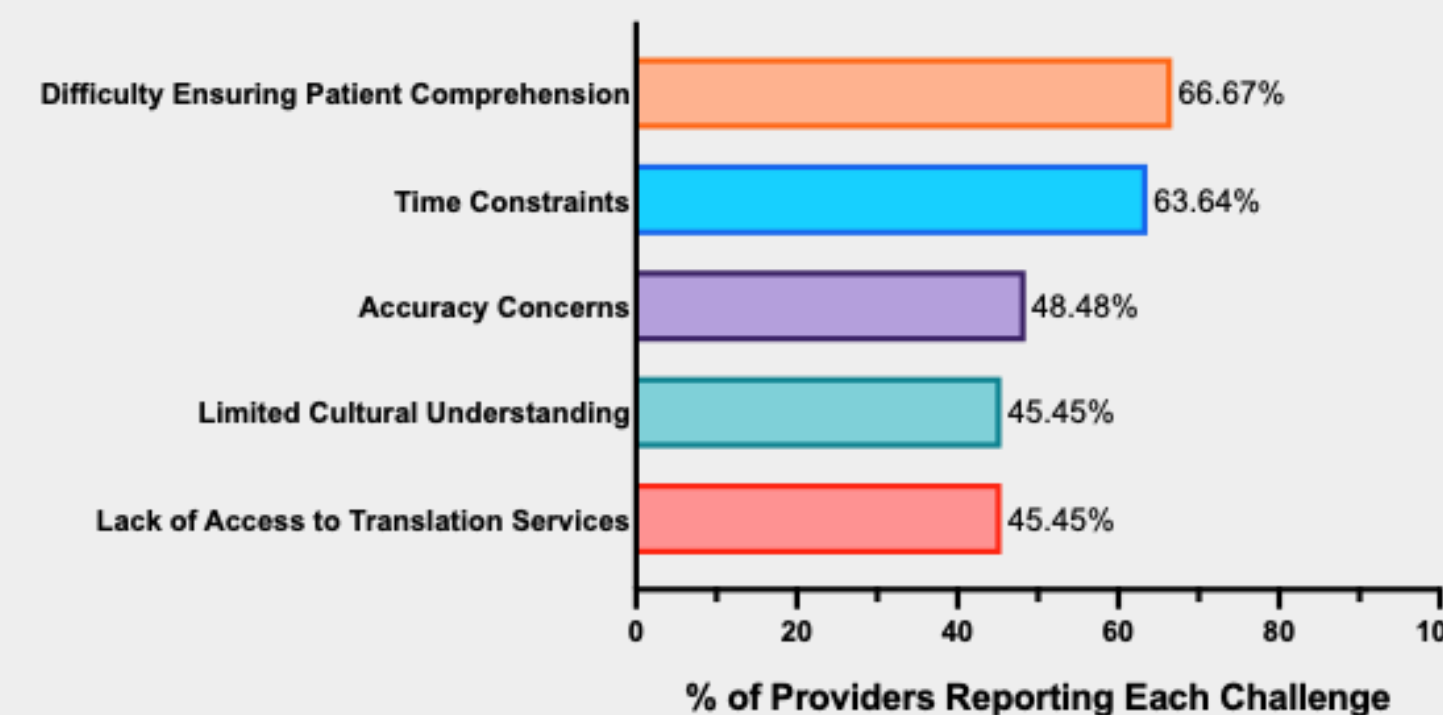


Figure 3: These findings highlight obstacles in effective communication, with comprehension and time constraints as the most prevalent issues faced by providers.

Results

Provider Confidence in Effectively Communicating and Ensuring Patient Understanding through Patient Letters

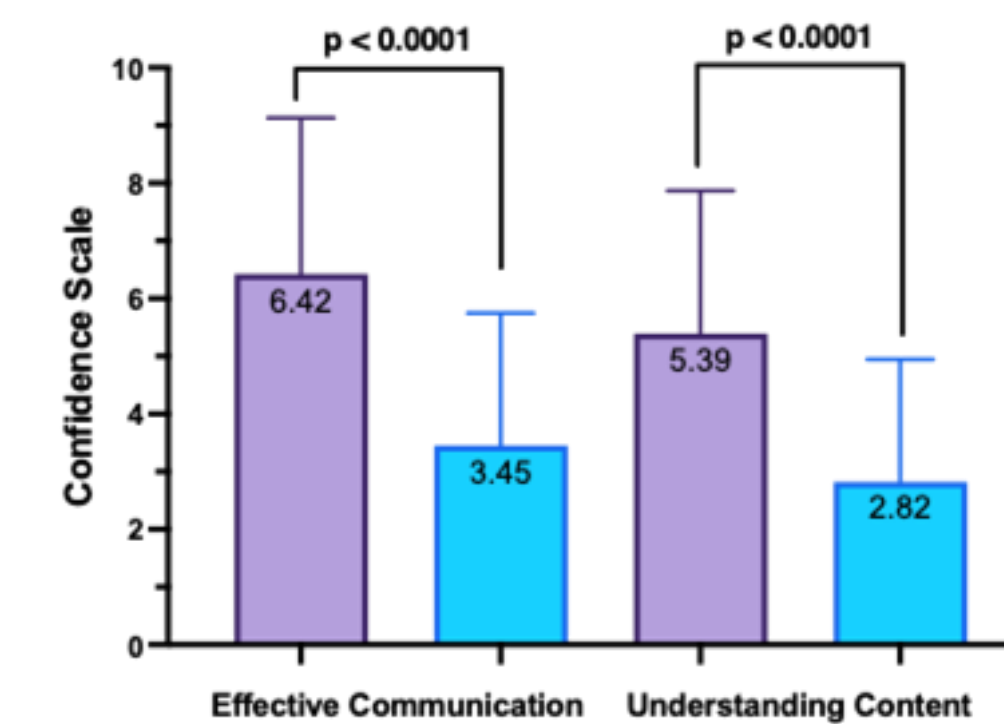


Figure 4: The average confidence for both effective communication and understanding content for general patients is significantly higher than for patients with LEP.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The findings suggest a need for enhanced training programs to improve provider confidence and effectiveness in communicating with LEP patients.

By addressing the identified challenges and leveraging preferred communication methods, healthcare providers can improve patient outcomes and satisfaction.

Future initiatives should focus on developing training that address the nuances of language and cultural sensitivity.

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