

Healthcare Experiences Among English- Speaking International Residents

□ The following four themes emerged from the interviews

1) International English-speaking residents are satisfied with healthcare in Japan	2) Communication/Language barriers exist even among higher-level Japanese-speaking international residents	3) Japanese physicians could work to improve patient-centered care and bedside manner	4) International English-speaking residents want to take an active part in their treatment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The system overall is easy to navigate and accessible • Although some come from 100% free healthcare countries (e.g., UK) the costs seem fair and affordable • Seeing a doctor and receiving treatment is efficient • Being able to choose any doctor or specialist is convenient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressed feeling more reassured if an interpreter or English-language service was available, even if not used • Residents speaking in Japanese with physicians sometimes felt a feeling of nervousness just because they were foreign • Many still struggle with medical terminology in Japanese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in active listening and understanding of patients' concerns • Implement a culturally sensitive trauma-Informed care approach • Patients feeling like just a number in a system and not being taken seriously 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want the ability to advocate for their own care • Prefer more explanation about exams, diagnosis, treatment, and procedures • Interested in more of a holistic approach to care • Want to be treated as an equal partner in their care.

Voices of English-Speaking International Residents

"Health care (in Japan) is reasonably priced and accessible."

"The biggest frustration is that the doctors I have visited were dismissive – I felt as though I was not being heard."

"As an international student, I feel lucky to have a lot of support from the university."

"There seems to be a culture of not questioning doctors in Japan, where the doctor is always right."

"When using an interpreter, I always felt like I was part of the background."

"Even though I'm comfortable using Japanese, I still try to look for clinics or doctors who have some English or provide other language services, as I feel they may be more internationally-minded and more caring about foreign patients."

"The quality of care here (in Japan) is high, and I trust that the doctors are knowledgeable."

"I want to work with them (the doctors) to find out what is wrong and find a solution, not just take medicine and hope that it goes away."

"I was surprised when I accompanied a refugee to the hospital as their interpreter, but they were denied care, due to language."

"Making appointments here is fairly easy, and the visits are usually efficient."

"I wish I could have been given more detailed information about my treatment."

"I have a lot of trust in the system that they are systematically on top of things."

Recommendations

To serve the needs of a culturally diverse population, the healthcare system must take measures to improve the knowledge and understanding of cultural competence and trauma-informed care.

❑ Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is the ability to **collaborate and communicate** with individuals from **different cultures** to effectively deliver healthcare services that **meet the social, cultural, and linguistic needs** of patients.

It also encourages active dialogues in which patients and providers can ask questions, correct misunderstandings, and build trust.

Source: Betancourt, J. R., Green, A. R., & Carrillo, J. E. 2002. Cultural competence in health care: Emerging frameworks and practical approaches. New York: The Commonwealth Fund.

❑ Trauma-Informed Care

A trauma-informed approach to care acknowledges that healthcare organizations and professionals need to have a **complete picture of a patient's life situation** — past and present — to **provide effective health care services with a healing orientation.**

Adopting trauma-informed practices can potentially **improve patient engagement, treatment adherence, and health outcomes.**

Source: Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center

Requests from English-Speaking International Residents

“Training is needed across the board for how to deal with other cultures and how to be a people person, as a doctor, it should be a standard for how to deal with people in this field.”

“Mental health is also an important part of health and depending on the care that is received, the outcomes may be different, work on creating an atmosphere for the patient where you do not reinforce or create new trauma.”

“Dig around more and ask broader questions_{1,2} to look into the deeper causes of the problem rather than just a check box list for symptoms.”

“Listen more actively and not just assume what is wrong; try to work with the patient to find out what is the root of the problem and find a long-term solution.

“Treat the patient and not just the symptoms”

Summary

There are many positive and negative experiences among English-speaking international residents, but their **overall satisfaction with healthcare in Japan is high.**

When dissatisfaction was expressed, it was related mainly to the following:

- Communication with the physicians and cultural sensitivity
- Lack of detailed information provided about diagnosis and treatment
- The feeling of not being treated as a person

Recommendations

- Gain an understanding of **Cultural Competence** and **Trauma-Informed Care**; consider **implementing this approach in your own patient interactions.**
- Encourage an **atmosphere of active dialogue** with the patient
- **Build a rapport** with patients and try to **connect on an individual level**

Practicing these can lead to an **increase in the level of trust from patients, better adherence to treatment, and better health outcomes.**



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THANK YOU!