

# Can Dermatologists Improve Care for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Patients?

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, July 12, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) patients have reported unsatisfying experiences with the healthcare system. It has been demonstrated that health disparities for DHH patients exist in the field of dermatology. An article in this month's issue of SKIN: The Journal of Cutaneous Medicine discusses barriers for

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*Anuk Burli*

DDH patients who receive dermatologic care and offers suggestions to improve patient care for this vulnerable population.

Many members of the DHH community use American Sign Language (ASL) as a form of communication. ASL interpreter services are a rarity in many dermatology practices. Despite federal mandates requiring interpreters

(such as the Americans with Disabilities Act), there are financial barriers that limit a small dermatology clinic's ability to hire an ASL interpreter because it is cost prohibitive. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has created additional barriers to dermatologic care for the DHH population. For DHH patients, masks block facial expressions (an essential part of ASL), lip reading, and reduces a provider's speaking volume making both visual and audio forms of communications more difficult.

Anuk Burli, BS and his co-authors offers some suggestions to improve the care of DHH patients. Cost-effective contractual ASL interpreters are available to lessen the financial burden of hiring an interpreter. Practices could allow and encourage family members or care givers to be present in the exam room to aid in communication with the patient. Finally, dermatology clinics should consider purchasing a few “Safe 'N' Clear” masks which allows DHH patients read facial expressions and lips while protecting the patient and provider from COVID-19.

The authors hope that their article raises awareness of this issue within the practice of dermatology and that their suggestions for improvement will ultimately enhance patient care for this vulnerable population.

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SKIN: The Journal of Cutaneous Medicine® is a peer-reviewed online medical journal that is the official journal of The National Society for Cutaneous Medicine. The mission of SKIN is to provide

an enhanced and accelerated route to disseminate new dermatologic knowledge for all aspects of cutaneous disease.

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Anuk Burli

University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry

burlianuk@gmail.com

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