A Survey of Language Diversity and Communication in Indian Academic Emergency Departments

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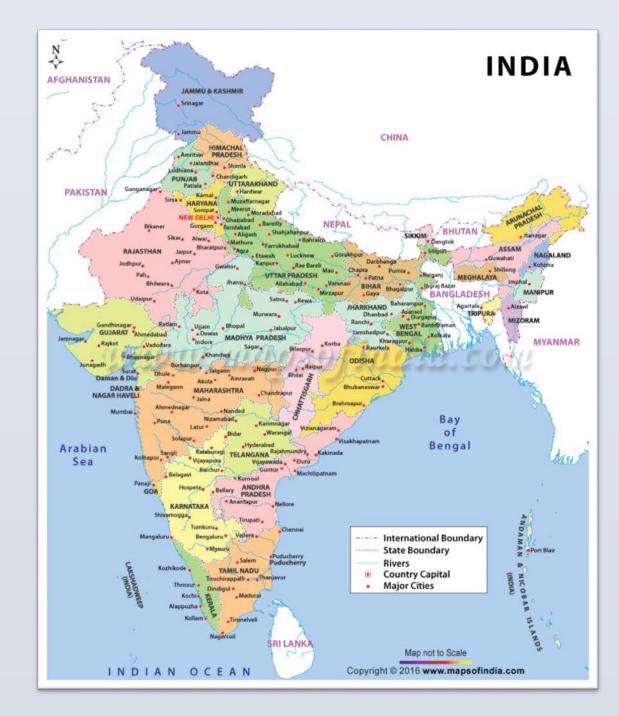
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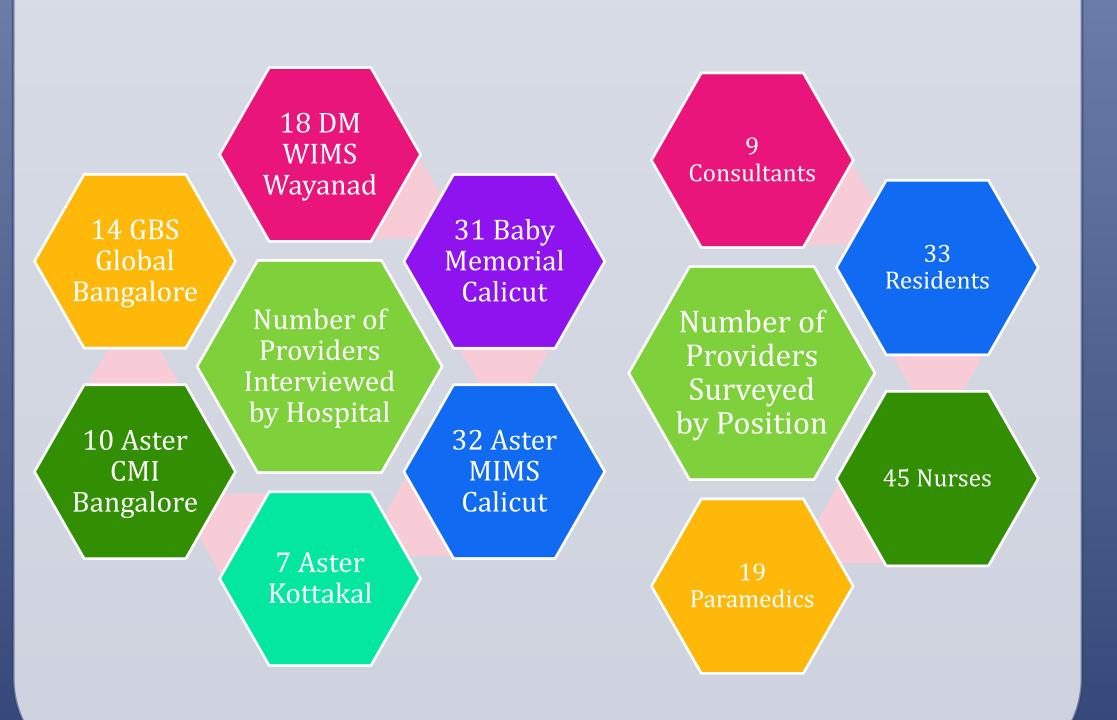
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INTRODUCTION

Communication in the
Emergency Department (ED) is
profoundly important given the acuity of
patients and lack of prior medical
history. In India, patient care is further
complicated by the diversity of spoken
languages that vary by region. In
addition, medical training is primarily
delivered in English. Our objective was
to document language diversity among
clinicians in Indian EDs linked to an
international training
program and explore issues related
to clinician-clinician and clinicianpatient communication.



Sample Populations



METHODS

A mixed-methods investigation was performed at 6 EDs in Kerala and Karnataka from May to July of 2017. A single researcher conducted onsite semi-structured interviews and focus groups with emergency department nurses, paramedics, residents, and consultants. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using a rapid assessment process. Additionally, a cross-sectional survey of ED clinicians was conducted via on-site convenience sampling and physician email. ANOVA and binary logistic regression were used to perform subgroup analysis.

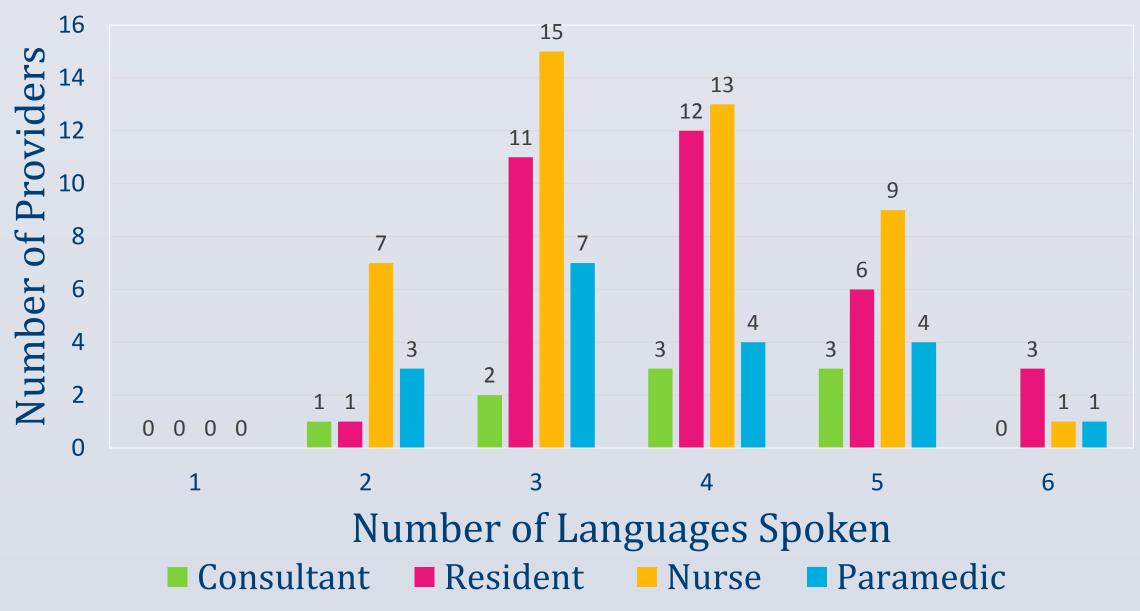






RESULTS

Number of Languages Spoken by Providers: Survey Data





"Most of the communication errors do happen when you are not keeping the patient and the bystanders in the loop right from the beginning of your treatment." Consultant

"It's like a fish market here when handovers happen. As it is, the ED is always very busy and it's very chaotic." Resident

"Between the nursing staff, its not much big factor, because everyone knows Malayalam and also English, but between the doctors and the nurse there comes the issue, because some of the doctors don't know Malayalam." Nurse

Survey Findings

73% of providers

reported that they

used a non-English

language to speak

to their fellow

providers most of

the time

53% reported at

least

one critical incident

over the last year

where poor

communication

played a part

39% of residents

reported that they

communicated

with fellow

providers in

English, while

71% of nurses

reported they use

Malayalam

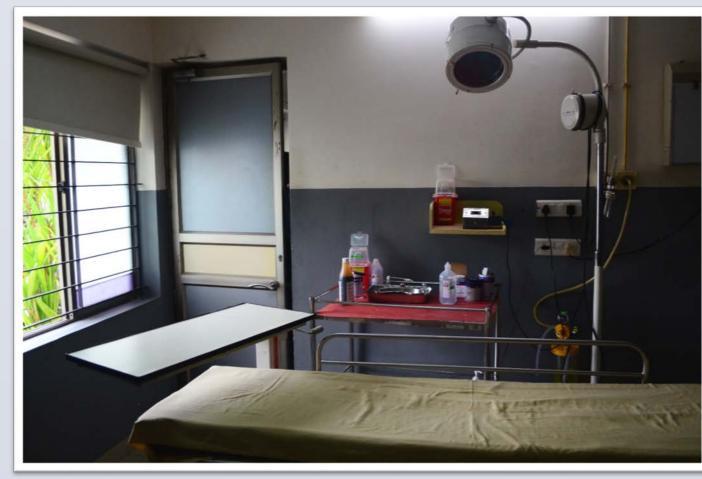
64% felt that information was lost or changed when English medical knowledge was explained in a different language

Based off binary logistic regression doctors were more likely to report fluency in English than other providers p<0.003

"Basically, these Kerala people don't know what's happening, what is the disease, what is his condition, what is going on....Without understanding what is going on this patient they may not cooperate with us. That's a big issue." Nurse

CONCLUSIONS

Our study is the first to document language diversity in Indian EDs. Important findings include the common use of non-English language in clinicianclinician communication and the frequent perceived loss of information in clinician-patient communication. The reported rates of critical incidents linked to poor communication are higher than reported in comparable studies¹ and warrant further research and action. Additionally, the interviews revealed the challenges that bystanders can bring and the gap that exists in health literacy in the general population. Moving forward the benefits of language training in residency programs, and greater health information interventions for the public would be worth pursuing.



REFERENCE

1 Pun, J.K. et al., 2016. Complexities of emergency communication: clinicians' perceptions of communication challenges in a trilingual emergency department. Journal of clinical nursing, 26(21–22), pp.3396–3407.

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