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## **JAPANESE IMMIGRANT FAMILIES' EXPERIENCES OF ACCESSING HEALTHCARE IN THE US**

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**Background:** About half of the foreign-born Japanese population in the US report that they are not proficient in English. This suggests that a large number of Japanese immigrants may be facing language and cultural barriers in healthcare.

**Objective:** We aimed to examine Japanese immigrants' experiences and needs related to accessing healthcare in the US.

**Design/Methods:** We distributed a survey to 69 Japanese families at a K-8 public school and received 32 responses. The survey asked about participants' demographic information, English proficiency, and experiences with healthcare services.

**Results:** Seventy-eight percent of respondents had lived in the US for less than five years. Most reported that it was "very difficult" (31%) or "difficult" (44%) to navigate the healthcare system. Low English proficiency was associated with increased perceived difficulty ( $p = 0.035$ ). More respondents preferred to have a Japanese-speaking physician or translator (63%) versus a culturally or ethnically Japanese physician (16%), and described a desire to communicate symptoms in their native language, especially in primary care and pediatric care settings. Proximity to the office, positive reviews by acquaintances and online, and the option to schedule appointments online were important factors when choosing a physician.

**Conclusion:** Findings here highlight areas in which all physicians, regardless of their cultural or ethnic identity, may be able to better meet the needs of Japanese immigrants. Primary care providers could potentially utilize strategies such as language interpreter services and online appointment scheduling to alleviate some of the challenges that this population faces in navigating the healthcare system.