

# Deaf Strong Hospital (DSH) 2006

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**Abstract:** Deaf Strong Hospital (DSH), a role-reversal exercise for first year medical students, was conducted September 8, 2006. In this role playing exercise, the medical students were “patients” who seek medical attention from “doctors,” who are ASL users from the Rochester Deaf community. Overcoming and understanding communication challenges are the main objectives of this exercise. Additionally, the medical students learn that culturally Deaf people do not view themselves as “disabled.”

## What is DSH?

DSH is a unique and visually entertaining role-reversal exercise. The students will be given a list of symptoms of various illnesses (fever, headache, various pains) and will be instructed to go to the 'deaf hospital' we have set up in the medical school to receive care for their fictitious illnesses. Students will interact with Deaf volunteers who have been trained to act as physicians and other healthcare providers. The students will attempt to exchange scripted healthcare information with the volunteers without resorting to spoken English. They may use gesture, writing, or sign language only.



Strong Memorial Hospital: a 750-bed tertiary care hospital serving Finger Lakes region

## DSH Synopsis

- Before 1 PM: Medical students arrive.
- 1 PM: Opening remarks.
- 1 – 3 PM: DSH experimental activities with three fictitious illness scenarios (see sample scenario below)
- 3 PM: Lecture, “The Deaf Community and Healthcare” by Jessica Cuculick, MS
- 4 PM: Small group discussions

## DSH History

- Established January 1998
- Lisa Harmer & Pam Pollard, PAH, MD (Promoting Awareness in Healthcare, Medical and Deaf)
- Deaf Wellness Center
- Now sponsored by NCDHR's Education and Training Subcommittee.

## Fictitious Illness Scenario

The hearing patient would read:

Unfortunately, for the past 2 days you've had a headache, fever, blurry vision and loss of appetite. Since you woke up this morning you also had difficulty concentrating and a stiff neck. Please go to the Doctor's Office for your appointment.

The Deaf Doctor would interact with the above patient:

- 1) Ask the student their name and why they are here.
- 2) The student seems to be very sick. They have bad communication skills and are confused. Maybe they are mentally ill. Ask the student to draw a picture of anything they ( a person, a house, anything).
- 3) Ask the student to remember and repeat 3 signs (airplane, house, apple).
- 4) Ask the student “What is today's date?”
- 5) Because the student did not do what you asked, tell the student he or she is mentally ill. Tell the student to go see the psychiatrist (\*\* During the small group discussion, the student mentioned that he thought that his diagnosis was meningitis.)

## Medical Students' Evaluation

N = 98, RR = 95%

	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Not Sure	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree
I learned valuable things through my participation in DSH.	93 (95%)	3 (3%)	2 (2%)
My DSH experience is likely to positively impact my attitudes and behavior in future interactions with patients who do not speak English.	93 (95%)	2 (2%)	3 (3%)
The medical school should offer more formal programs (e.g., classes, CEUs) addressing healthcare and Deaf people.	78 (80%)	15 (15%)	5 (5%)
The role-playing time was used effectively (Note: Most complaints were about the waiting for TTYs).	87 (89%)	6 (6%)	5 (5%)
The lecture was informative.	91 (93%)	2 (2%)	5 (5%)
Visiting the vendor tables enhanced my overall visit to DSH (Note: 3 students wrote they had no time to visit the tables).	48 (49%)	38 (39%)	9 (9%)
The small group discussion was a useful debriefing session.	90 (92%)	5 (5%)	3 (3%)

*“I feel this is a wonderful program and should be continued for years to come.”*

*“It was awesome – it allowed me to turn many of my experience overseas into understanding how to take care of deaf people and the daily challenges they experience – a connection I never realized before.”*

*“The frustration you feel as a hearing person in a deaf person world brings into sharp relief the need for patience and understanding when dealing with individuals with different methods of communications.”*

*“Where to learn ASL?!? Immersion classes offered anywhere? The lecture was wonderful! The small group was VERY informative!”*



## National Center for Deaf Health Research Rochester Prevention Research Center

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The doctors, complete with white lab coats and stethoscopes around the necks, were actually 35 volunteers from Rochester's Deaf community (D&C, 9/6/07).

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