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Abstract

Since interpersonal communication between people having the same cultural background may already potentially lead to false conclusions, the probability of misunderstandings in multicultural and multilingual interactions may be substantial. Here, we start from the proposition that those misunderstandings may have substantial consequences especially in health settings (i.e., inadequate treatment and endangerment of health). Practitioner's communication skills and intercultural competence may therefore be essential for the course of the medical treatment. The present study investigates the perception of the communication in medical encounters by general practitioners with a special emphasis to intercultural encounters. The research questions are explored by a qualitative research design. Interviews are conducted with 20 practitioners and those are analysed by qualitative content analysis. The results show the main aspects of doctor-patient communication in relation to intercultural interactions and intercultural competence. The findings allow construct validation and the development of quantitative instruments of intercultural communication and competence.