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## **INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AS A VITAL TRAIT OF DOCTOR'S PERSONALITY IN SHORT STORIES BY WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS**

*The Doctor Stories* by William Carlos Williams offers readers a glimpse into the life of a physician practicing in a diverse and multicultural setting [2]. Dr. Williams, a masterful storyteller and a medical practitioner himself, intricately weaves together tales that underscore the significance of intercultural competence in a doctor's personality [6; 9]. In this paper, we will explore how the characters in Williams' stories, particularly those who speak languages other than English or employ heavy slang, challenge the doctors and highlight the importance of intercultural competence in providing effective healthcare.

Dr. Williams' stories introduce us to a myriad of characters, many of whom speak languages other than English or use heavy slang, making communication a significant challenge for the doctors. In each of these instances, intercultural competence emerges as a pivotal trait in the doctor's personality. It goes beyond language proficiency and extends into the realm of cultural understanding.

Intercultural competence refers to the ability to communicate and interact effectively with representatives of other different cultural backgrounds [1]. It encompasses a range of skills, including cultural awareness, sensitivity, adaptability, and language proficiency [4; 5]. In a medical context, possessing intercultural competence is paramount as patients come from diverse backgrounds, each with its own set of cultural norms, beliefs, and languages [3]. Doctors who possess

intercultural competence can establish trust and rapport with patients who speak different languages or use slang. This trust is fundamental for accurate diagnosis and effective treatment plans. Patients who feel understood and respected in their cultural context are more likely to have a positive healthcare experience. This can lead to better adherence to treatment plans and improved overall health outcomes [5]. Intercultural competence can contribute to reducing healthcare disparities by ensuring that individuals from diverse backgrounds receive equitable care.

William Carlos Williams, beyond his remarkable literary contributions, was also a physician who practiced medicine among working-class immigrants from various countries [6]. His experiences as a doctor in such a diverse community added depth and authenticity to his stories, shedding light on the unique challenges doctors face in such settings [2].

One of the most pervasive challenges that Williams encountered in his medical practice was language barriers. The immigrants in his community came from diverse linguistic backgrounds, and many of them had limited proficiency in English. For a doctor, effective communication is not merely about conveying medical information but also about understanding patients' concerns, symptoms, and medical histories accurately. The presence of multiple languages and dialects made this a formidable challenge.

Beyond language, Williams had to navigate a complex web of cultural differences. Each group of immigrants brought with them their own customs, beliefs, and healthcare practices. Understanding and respecting these cultural nuances was crucial to building trust and providing effective care. Many of the immigrants Williams served were part of the working class and faced economic hardships. This presented its own set of challenges, as affordability and access to healthcare were often barriers to receiving timely and adequate medical attention.

Williams's experiences as a physician ministering to working-class immigrants highlight the multifaceted challenges that doctors face in such diverse and underserved communities. His stories serve as a testament to the importance of empathy, cultural sensitivity, and intercultural competence in the medical profession.

Beyond medical knowledge and clinical skills, doctors in these settings must possess a deep understanding of the social, cultural, and economic factors that impact their patients' health.

Incorporating these experiences into his literary works, Williams humanizes the doctor-patient relationship and underscores the vital role that doctors play in bridging gaps in healthcare access and understanding [7; 8; 9]. Through his stories, he encourages both medical professionals and society at large to recognize the significance of addressing these challenges and striving for equitable healthcare for all, regardless of linguistic or cultural backgrounds. In doing so, Williams's legacy as both a physician and a writer continues to resonate, reminding us of the enduring importance of compassionate and culturally sensitive healthcare.

In *The Doctor Stories*, William Carlos Williams skillfully portrays the challenges doctors face when dealing with patients who speak languages other than English or use heavy slang. Through these stories, he underscores the significance of intercultural competence in a doctor's personality. Doctors who possess this trait can bridge linguistic and cultural gaps, providing more effective and compassionate healthcare. In an increasingly diverse world, intercultural competence is not just a desirable quality but a vital one for healthcare professionals, as highlighted by the timeless narratives of Dr. Williams.

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