

Introduction

Project Presentation

The MedSigne project's main goal is to improve the quality of the interactions between future healthcare workers and deaf patients in Geneva. How do we achieve this? Thanks to the creation of an optional education opportunity, reiterated yearly, focused on medical students in Geneva. This training will allow 28 students to familiarize themselves with, on the one hand, the problem posed by deafness, and on the other hand the basics of French Sign Language and Cued Speech.

At the moment, one thousandth of the Swiss Romandie population is deaf, which represents around 2000 people. Their daily lifestyle requires a specific organization, including activities related to healthcare. A medical consultation is far from trivial, be it even just finding an interpreter or coder that is available. Furthermore, these professionals are relatively few.

Considering healthcare workers, they have most often never been informed about the problematic posed by deafness and find themselves in the same situation as the patient: unable to communicate during a medical consultation. The Geneva University Hospitals do not have an interpretation service for cued speech or sign language at their disposal, nor do they currently employ doctors speaking one of these two languages.

The difficulty deaf patients have communicating with healthcare personnel can cause medical errors, stress, and a lack of satisfaction on both sides. Indeed, communication is particularly important in the medical field and the University of Geneva itself insists on this notion during the whole healthcare students' curricula.

So as to resolve these communication difficulties, we have decided to start a training opportunity which is composed of basic French Sign Language classes for healthcare workers and an introduction to cued speech on one hand, and on the other, conferences that will cover multiple facets of deafness. We hope that the students trained every year thanks to this project will be capable of welcoming deaf or hearing-impaired individuals they encounter during their professional life with much more ease. We also hope that deaf patients coming to the Geneva University Hospitals will be able to communicate more efficiently with healthcare professionals and that the latter will be attentive to their needs and specificities.

Deaf individuals ask for better care and medical students are interested by the possibility offered by this training.

The MedSigne program will start as soon as September 2015. 28 healthcare students in Geneva will be able to voluntarily sign up and benefit from our training during the year, with a fee of 100 Swiss Francs.

Contact :

- You can write to medsigne@gmail.com
- You can view our project's description on the following website (in French):
<http://aemg.unige.ch/activites/medsigne>
- You can visit our Facebook page ! www.facebook.com/BTSGe
- You can also send us paper mail :

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Detailed view of the project

Context

Breaking the Silence has been an IFMSA project since 2010, implemented by several different organizations, not only in the USA but also in Europe. Its primary objective is to allow a better interaction between deaf or hearing-impaired patients and doctors. In French-speaking regions, these projects aiming to teach sign language to medical students emerged in 2009 in France, in large medical universities such as Claude Bernard (Lyon 1) and Paris Diderot to respond to the needs of the deaf population, that represent around 3 million people in this country. In the specific case of the Claude Bernard University, approximately 60 students were enrolled right from the first year, and this training opportunity generated a great amount of enthusiasm on both the teachers' side as well as on the students'. In the case of Paris Diderot, the amount of students enrolled was doubled in a single year, which allowed for the creation of more lessons.

In Switzerland, the *Breaking the Silence* project was initiated in 2012 by Lausanne medical students from METIS and finally resulted in the creation of the first French Sign Language course in Romandie Switzerland, in 2014. This course was aimed at students and healthcare professionals. It has, since then, been a great success, and due to a growing demand, waiting lists were created and new lessons have been organized.

Inspired by these projects, we decided to launch these lessons in Geneva, and we hope our initiative will be crowned by success.

Objectives

This project allows the information of medical students in Geneva concerning the following notions:

- Shared handicap
- The problems posed by deafness
- The different means available for discussing with deaf individuals (French Sign Language, Cued Speech, etc.)
- The French Sign Language interpreters and the cued speech coders
- The appropriate use of communication methods.

This training will:

- Give access to basic French Sign Language classes to students for an affordable price (100 Francs vs 550 Francs per semester for a conventional course, which is often too expensive for a student's budget)
- Allow students to learn the basics of cued speech
- Allow to train *communication helpers* amongst students
- Allow to ease communication between deaf patients and healthcare workers
- Allow to improve deaf patient care at the Geneva University Hospital
- Allow to enhance the use of sign language interpreters and coders in the field of healthcare
- Allow to enhance the therapeutic link between deaf patients and healthcare workers, who will both be more at ease during medical consultations

However, this project does not train French Sign Language interpreters amongst medical students.

Course program

Target population

Concerning the deaf-themed conferences, they will be open to any individual who wishes to participate.

The French Sign Language and cued speech trainings will be open to 28 healthcare students in Geneva:

- Students from the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Geneva (from 2nd to 6th year)
- Students from the High School of Health of the University of Geneva

Due to logistical constraints, we have been forced to exclude from participation students who are only in their first year of medical studies or students who are in their preparatory year (High School of Health). Enrollment will nonetheless be possible if there are still places available.

Program

Conferences:

- Relais Surdit  Gen ve will present the concept of shared handicap
- Tanya Al-Khudri, the first deaf nurse in Geneva and a member of our project, will present her experience in leading her studies to become a nurse
- Members of the University Hospitals of Grenoble (France) will present the way they work and their medical unit in French Sign Language
- H l ne Clouet, representing the A Capella foundation, will present the cued speech
- The S5 Association will present characteristic elements in the deaf culture

With regards to the French Sign Language lessons: Two professional trainers working for the Swiss Deaf Federation will be in charge of leading the classes and teaching the French Sign Language to students. The lessons will deal with the following subjects:

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|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1: Communication Basics | 6: Numbers |
| 2: Healthcare workers | 7: Interpersonal relationships |
| 3: Body | 8: Ages of life |
| 4: Practical vocabulary | 9: Psychiatry |
| 5: Nutrition | 10: Sport and Traumatology |

Concerning cued speech: Two professional coders working for the foundation A Capella will be responsible for teaching cued speech to students.