

CASE STUDY

Silver Cross Hospital

PRACTICE TOPICS

**CULTURAL COMPETENCE
COMMUNICATION**

- **Designing learning and practice that target real client issues**
- **Exploring cultural differences that learners encounter every day on the job**
- **Discovering creative solutions for cultural misunderstandings**

Silver Cross Hospital (Joliet, IL) asked us to develop a program for managers on cultural competence in health care. They wanted to cover a number of angles: cultural differences among staff, between staff and doctors, and between staff and patients.

Diversity is a complex issue, one that requires changing points of view as well as changing behavior. We felt we needed to engage participants in discussion and analysis, to challenge their preconceptions, and to give them knowledge about differences and resources to explore the topic further. In addition, we felt it was crucial to address the specific diversities at Silver Cross, rather than waste time in generalities. We needed to know where misunderstandings were arising, and what differences were involved.

After several meetings with the hospital's head of organizational development, we held a focus group with top managers: nurses, doctors, administrators and department heads. We elicited stories of conflicts and confusions that had actually happened at Silver Cross.

We asked for a breakdown of ethnicity, gender, age, educational background and so forth, both for the doctors and employees and for the patient population. We asked these managers which diversity issues were most important for us to address in the training. And finally, we learned some idiosyncratic Silver Cross terminology, to help give our scenes the greatest possible sense of immediacy.

These situations included American nurses interacting with foreign-born doctors; support staff dealing with patients of differing ethnic groups; and managers and their direct reports misunderstanding each other because of cultural differences. Participants coached the interactors and often worked directly with them to demonstrate better ways of dealing with diversity. In every session, teams of learners working with interactors discovered creative and memorable solutions to cultural difficulties.

Participants rated this half-day session the best workshop of the year. After initially presenting the program three times, Silver Cross brought us back the following year to offer it again.