

Enabling healthcare access of Deaf through digital technology

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ABSTRACT

Summary: The Deaf make up a unique linguistic minority of about 160,000 in Malaysia, and converse in the Bahasa Isyarat Malaysia (BIM). Far removed from the medical definition of deaf disability, the Deaf (note, with an uppercase 'D') is associated with a culture and choice of language that allows them to better navigate society. Today, the Deaf continue to face significant challenges in accessing healthcare, from systemic barriers to lesser than average health literacy levels. The provision of sign language interpreters (SLI) for healthcare consultations is not a legislation in Malaysia. Furthermore, the shortage of interpreters and communication barriers has led to their under-utilization of healthcare services in this country. To ensure a safe and effective communication modality between healthcare personnel and Deaf individuals, we proposed the DITETM app. Intended for use by Deaf, SLI and healthcare professionals it hopes to increase healthcare access, utilization, and ultimately health outcome of the Deaf.