



*Assuring patient safety
and quality care*

*Guaranteeing the highest quality of
care and patient outcome*

*Steering compliance with
strong education and internal
communication*

Healthcare Providers Issue

PATIENT AND FAMILY CENTERED CARE: The Critical Role of Healthcare Interpreters

Professional healthcare interpreters provide the assurance of safety, quality, accuracy, and confidentiality required in a healthcare setting. When it comes to facilitating communication in a clinical encounter between parties that don't speak the same language, there is a large difference between family members, friends or untrained bilingual staff and professional healthcare interpreters. Certified healthcare interpreters understand medical terminology in both languages and employ professional techniques to handle the complexities that arise with patients, families, and healthcare providers.

In the healthcare system, where complex medical terminology leave many English speakers confused or misinformed, language barriers not only increase miscommunication, but open the door to misdiagnoses, non-compliance and unnecessary



or redundant medical tests, all leading to a lesser quality of care and contributing to racial and ethnic health disparities.

More than 25 million people speak English less than very well in the U.S. and may be considered limited English proficient (LEP). Competent healthcare interpreters are essential to effective communication that ensures the provision of safe and high-quality care to racial and ethnic minorities, and are critical in the effort to reduce health disparities. Yet many LEP patients are not provided with competent interpreters and rely on family members, friends, and untrained bilingual staff.

Spanish speaking 18-year-old William Ramírez, became quadriplegic as a result of a misdiagnosed intracerebellar hemorrhage. The paramedics, assisted by an untrained interpreter, assessed that William had suffered an intentional drug overdose based on the use of the word “intoxicado”. The patient meant that he felt dizzy and the paramedics gathered that he had overdosed on drugs. The ER staff did not check further, treated the man as if he was intoxicated and did not realize he was having a cerebral hemorrhage. William sued the hospital and was awarded \$71 million.



Effective communication is crucial to quality care...

SENIOR HEALTHCARE EXECUTIVES: *Assuring Patient Safety and Quality Care While Keeping the Lights On*

The healthcare interpreting profession has changed dramatically over the years. Heightened public awareness, demographic shifts, technology, national standards, new regulations, and financial pressure have affected the way healthcare providers ensure language access for their patients. Add to that The Joint Commission standards

requiring that providers ensure and document that those providing interpreting services are competent to do so, and this growing trend for accountability has created an insistence on certifying the skills and knowledge of perspective and current healthcare interpreters. It is in response to this progression that CCHI has developed and operates a national certification program for

healthcare interpreters to provide an assurance of competency.

It is just smart business. Relying on untrained interpreters risks:

- Federal funding
- The Joint Commission accreditation
- Office for Civil Rights investigation
- Patient compliance, safety, and outcomes

“When it comes to interpreters, healthcare executives want to make sure they hire talented people who can provide high-quality language services. With the development of the CCHI healthcare interpreter certification, healthcare organizations can rest assured that qualified, competent professionals will be helping their patients.”

– Marsha Regenstein, Ph.D.
George Washington University

PHYSICIANS: *Guaranteeing the Highest Quality of Care and Patient Outcome*

Effective communication between patients and healthcare providers is essential to ensure accurate diagnosis and treatment, obtain informed consent and prevent medical errors. CCHI’s certification credentialing for healthcare interpreters assures that interpreters meet specific demonstrable skills to ensure effective communication between patients and medical

staff. Patients are able to focus on their healthcare concerns rather than communication concerns.

It is just smart medicine to get the whole story, the first time. A certified healthcare interpreter improves:

- Diagnostic Time
- Quality of Care
- Patient Outcome
- Professional Reputation
- Safeguarding of Medical License



Healthcare interpreters are a critical part of the equation

PROGRAM MANAGERS: Steering Compliance with Strong Education and Internal Communication



Healthcare interpreter certification addresses the critical language barriers that LEP patients experience as they access healthcare. With the implementation of certification, healthcare providers will see improved patient outcomes and better patient satisfaction because providers will have a clearer sense of a certified interpreter's knowledge, skills and abilities on the job and understand the problems that arise from relying on family members, friends, and untrained interpreters who are prone to mistakes and omissions. CCHI's certification program ensures quality as well as limits providers' legal liability. It also guarantees consistency across healthcare providers and systems that until recently have had to develop their own methods of assessing interpreters' competency and skills.

It's just smart management. Certified healthcare interpreters:

- Meet The Joint Commission Requirements
- Provide consistency for internal screening processes
- Streamline recruiting and training
- Ensure unbiased communication between patient and provider and increase patient safety

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the employment of interpreters and translators is projected to increase 46 percent between 2012 and 2022. Yet there is a misconception that anyone who is bilingual can function as an interpreter. The profession, however, requires not only language proficiency but also specialized knowledge of healthcare and medical terminology in both languages, strict adherence to the Interpreter's Code of Ethics (which

includes confidentiality procedures), accuracy, and an understanding of cultural competency practices. Increasingly hospitals, clinics and other healthcare entities will need interpreters who can demonstrate that they have the skills, knowledge and abilities to perform competently.

New accreditation standards for hospitals from The Joint Commission require that hospitals define staff qualifications specific to job responsibilities. In explaining the new standards, The Joint Commission states *"in addition to language proficiency, individuals used to interpret or translate also must possess a set of skills and follow professional practice standards and a code of ethics."*

(The Joint Commission: Advancing Effective Communication, Cultural Competence, and Patient- and Family- Centered Care: A Roadmap for Hospitals. Oakbrook Terrace, IL: The Joint Commission, 2010, at 57-58.)

51% of providers believed patients did not adhere to treatment because of culture or language.

— Institute of Medicine's report, *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health*

A child being treated at a hospital had a feeding tube inserted without anyone explaining the procedure to his Spanish-speaking mother or obtaining her consent. When the child was sent home with an oxygen tank, no one explained to his mother how to operate it.

LEP patients are more likely (52.4%) than English-proficient patients (35.9%) to suffer adverse events that are a result of communication errors. And of patients who experience physical harm, nearly half (46.8%) of LEP patients experience harm that ranges from temporary to fatal, compared to about one-quarter (24.4%) of English-proficient patients.

— Institute of Medicine's report, *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health*

The Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters

The Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI) operates a national certification program for healthcare interpreters. CCHI currently offers two certifications – the Core Certification Healthcare Interpreter™ (CoreCHI™) and the Certified Healthcare Interpreter™ (CHI™).

CCHI serves the needs of bilingual, spoken-language healthcare interpreters committed to demonstrating their professional knowledge, skills and abilities by becoming certified based on national standards. At the same time, CCHI serves many stakeholders (healthcare providers and insurers, language agencies, training providers, government agencies, patients) who need a qualified, certified and competency-based population of healthcare interpreters to ensure effective communication between healthcare providers and insurers and their patients to ensure access to high-quality healthcare.

CoreCHI™

The Core Certification Healthcare Interpreter™ (CoreCHI™) credential is the entry point into professional certification for healthcare interpreters regardless of the language(s) in which they interpret. The CoreCHI™ certification measures the interpreter's core professional knowledge, including such vital healthcare concepts as safety protocols, universal precautions, and HIPAA. The CoreCHI™ examination also assesses the interpreter's critical thinking and ethical decision-making skills needed to perform their duties in any healthcare setting.

CCHI's CoreCHI™ examination is a computer-based, 100-question, multiple-choice examination in English that covers the basics of healthcare interpreting and focuses on the following categories of knowledge:

- Managing an Interpreting Encounter
- Healthcare Terminology
- Interacting with Other Healthcare Professionals
- Preparing for an Interpreting Encounter
- Cultural Responsiveness

CHI™

The Certified Healthcare Interpreter™ (CHI™) certification is a language specific assessment of the interpreter's performance skills.

Currently, the CHI™ examination is available in Arabic, Mandarin and Spanish. It is administered only during certain testing "windows" each quarter.

CCHI's CHI™ examination is an oral performance exam that includes a number of vignettes testing consecutive and simultaneous interpreting plus sight translation and translation skills in a specific language, and focuses on the following categories of knowledge, skills and abilities:

- Performing Healthcare Interpreting
- Sight Translation / Translation of Healthcare Documents



CCHI's goals, objectives and approach have earned the support of the American Hospital Association, American Public Health Association, The California Endowment, NCQA, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and many more.

For an up-to-date list of supporters see CCHI's website at: <http://www.cchicertification.org>

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To learn more about the CCHI's Certification Program, Interpreter Registry, and Continuing Education Accreditation Program (CEAP), please visit our website – www.cchicertification.org – and subscribe to our electronic Newsletter.