



Working with a Medical Interpreter

Working in Harmony to Create an Inclusive Patient Experience

Medical interpreters are trained in healthcare terminology and are taught that impartiality and confidentiality are of the utmost importance. As important as it is for interpreters to have a deep understanding of both the healthcare and interpreting fields, it is also crucial for clinicians and healthcare providers to understand how to work with interpreters when providing care to a Limited English Proficient (LEP) patient.

Medical Interpreter Protocols for an Assignment

- An Interpreter will provide a professional introduction (see next page).
- For In-Person sessions, the interpreter will position themselves in a way to directly communicate with the patient.
- An interpreter will interpret everything that is said by you and the patient.
- Your interpreter may ask to pause on occasion to better manage the flow of communication.
- During a session, an interpreter may take notes or even use physical/electronic dictionaries.
- Remember your interpreter is only there to facilitate communication, they are not there to assist in an exam, and are under strict rules to not be left alone with a patient.

Preparing for an Interpreter

- Plan for the session to take twice as long.
- Brief the interpreter on the subject of the appointment and any necessary background information.
- Do not ask for the interpreter's opinion or assistance with a physical examination. The interpreter is there to facilitate communication between you and the patient, not to assist in any other way.



Working with a Medical Interpreter

Common Introductions

Hello, my name is _____, and I will be your interpreter for today.

- I will interpret everything you say.
- I will keep everything confidential.
- Please speak directly to each other, not to me.
- Please speak in short sentences so I can interpret.
- If I do this gesture (raised hand), please pause.

Guidelines for Working with an Interpreter

Do's during the interpreting session

- ✓ Use a trained qualified interpreter.
- ✓ Know how to access an interpreter: in-person, telephone, or video-conferencing.
- ✓ Remember that the interpreter will interpret everything that is said by the patient and clinician.
- ✓ Document the name of the interpreter. If a family member is interpreting, it is recommended to keep a qualified interpreter present during the session.
- ✓ The provider should share any important issues about the patient and any technical terminology that may come up during the appointment.
- ✓ Introduce the interpreter to the patient.
- ✓ Speak directly to the patient.
- ✓ Let the patient know that the interpreter might take notes but will destroy them after.

Don'ts during the interpreting session

- ⊗ Address comments to the patient while looking at the interpreter, or refer to the patient in the 3rd person.
- ⊗ Shout, speak too slowly or too quickly. It is best to speak at a normal pace, directly to the patient.
- ⊗ Have side conversations with the interpreter or other clinicians in front of the patient.
- ⊗ Use complicated jargon or idiomatic expressions that are difficult to interpret.
- ⊗ Leave interpreter alone with the patient.
- ⊗ Interpreters are not supposed to bathe, feed, speak, or keep company with the patient. The interpreter's role is only to interpret!
- ⊗ Interpreters should not talk to patients without a clinician present.
- ⊗ Do not assume that because a patient and an interpreter share the same language, they also share the same cultural background.

Thank you for insisting on the use of professional medical interpreting.