

# **Videoconferencing Medical Interpretation in a Public Hospital**

**Presenter - Terry Bautista  
Alameda County Medical Center  
Director of Interpreter-Translation  
Services**

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# **ACMC-Highland Hospital Interpretation Department**

- **Chinese patient sent to Psych ER, observed for 72 hours.**
- **Presenting problem: unable to speak English.**
- **Community protests at Board of Supervisors and complaint filed at The Office of Civil Rights (OCR).**
- **OCR issues Consent Decree.**

# **Consent Decree Requirements**

- **Signage**
- **On-site Interpreters**
- **Bilingual Consent Forms**
- **Statistical Reports**
- **Monthly, Quarterly, and Annual Reports to Community Advisory Committee (CAC)**
- **Bilingual Designated Employees**
- **Bilingual Managers**
- **On-Call, Services-As-Needed (SAN) Interpreters**

**ACMC-Highland Hospital  
Interpretation Department  
Mission Statement**

**To ensure timely access to medical services and provide sensitive and equal treatment for limited and non-English speakers, and the hearing-impaired.**

# **ACMC-Highland Hospital Interpretation Department**

## **STAFFING MIX**

**18 Medical Interpreter/Translators (13.8 FTEs)**

**19 On-Call, Services-As-Needed (SAN)**

**80 Bilingual-Designated Employees**

**2 Sign Interpreting Agencies**

**Language Line Services**

# **ACMC-Highland Hospital**

- **Designated Trauma Center for Northern Alameda County, thus a very busy ER.**
- **Interpreters service over 60 departments in-patient, clinics, and ancillary services.**
- **Teaching hospital.**
- **Serves indigent, undocumented, welfare recipients, and uninsured.**
- **Interpreters are available on a 24/7 basis.**

# **ACCESS TO SERVICES**

- **Non-English speaking patients have increased tremendously in the last decade.**
- **Hospital and clinic systems are overloaded with demand for services.**
- **Language assistance is needed at all points of contact during a patient visit – at registration, intake, medical encounter, discharge, pharmacy, follow-up appointments, ancillary services.**
- **For in-patient, language assistance is needed for pre-op, recovery, morning rounds, family conferences, financial eligibility.**

**Waiting time has become a serious barrier at any point of contact in the visit, and the system is under-resourced.**

# Medical Interpretation Today

**Most health care organizations  
currently rely on:**

- back-up language banks (Language Line), which are costly and lack quality assurance measures
- relatives and friends of patients
- available bilingual staff (commonly housekeepers and janitors), who lack proper training in medical interpretation

# **Medical Interpretation Today**

**Ultimately, Limited English Proficiency consumers may receive delayed and/or inferior health care services and experience poorer health status.**

# Health Access Foundation

- ? **Statewide 501 (c) (3) founded in 1987**
- ? **Advocates for quality, affordable health care for all Californians**
- ? **Coalition of over 200 member organizations:**
  - Communities of color
  - Immigrants
  - Disabled
  - Labor
  - Seniors
  - Health care providers
  - Community groups

# **Videoconferencing Medical Interpretation Project**

**Provides patient and provider with a real-time visual representation of a trained medical interpreter who, in turn can see both the patient and their provider, hear their words and assess their body language, providing access to professional medical interpretation.**

# **VIDEOCONFERENCING MEDICAL INTERPRETATION (VMI)**

**2000 Health Access approached Interpreter Services at Alameda County Medical Center (ACMC) and Community Health Network – San Francisco General Hospital (SFGH).**

**FY00-01 Proposal funded by California Telehealth Telemedicine Center to implement alpha and beta stages of pilot which began at Highland Hospital Campus of ACMC, then at SFGH.**

# **VIDEOCONFERENCING MEDICAL INTERPRETATION (VMI)**

- 2001** Clinical Trials conducted. Pilot testing of equipment and procedures for patient, provider, and interpreter. Succeeds at good satisfaction level and user-friendly encounter of live, remote, real-time interpreting on computer screen.
- 2002** ACMC Ambulatory Care Services receives additional funding to expand the VMI model into ACMC free-standing clinics beyond the Highland Hospital campus.
- 2003** New Critical Care and Clinics Building scheduled to open mid-year will have VMI capacity.

# **VIDEOCONFERENCING MEDICAL INTERPRETATION (VMI)**

- Trained medical interpreter in a stationary position in front of a personal computer, with small video camera at a designated station in the hospital.**
- Additional videoconferencing unit, laptop personal computer in patient exam room.**
- On-line connection with patient, provider, and interpreter.**



# **VIDEOCONFERENCING MEDICAL INTERPRETATION (VMI)**

## **Desired Benefits**

- a. Reduced waiting time for provider, patient and interpreter.**
- b. Shared resources between 2 hospitals.**
- c. Data-gathering on encounters, duration, and interpretation methodology.**

# **VIDEOCONFERENCING MEDICAL INTERPRETATION (VMI)**

## **Desired Benefits**

- d. Potential for training of bilingual employees and new hire interpreters in a controlled setting with qualified medical interpreters as models of good methodology and of cultural and linguistic appropriateness.**

# **Technology is Affordable and Standards Based**

- ? PC-based video camera units**
- ? Codecs are H.323 compliant**
- ? Wireless (802.11b) LAN connectivity within hospital floor or clinics**
- ? xDSL Virtual Private Network to Intranet and Internet**

# **Security and Privacy Challenges**

**? Will be HIPAA compliant**

**? Authentication**

**? Encryption**

**? Physical Layout and Access Issues**

# **VIDEOCONFERENCING MEDICAL INTERPRETATION (VMI)**

## **Frequently Asked Questions and Answers (FAQs)**

**Q: Does this replace face to face interpretation?**

**A: Absolutely not. It is meant to increase the incidents that an interpreter is available, used effectively.**

**Q: How much disruption will it have towards clinical or nursing procedures?**

**A: Very little, especially when a plan is clear, outlined, and coordinated.**

# **VIDEOCONFERENCING MEDICAL INTERPRETATION (VMI)**

## **Frequently Asked Questions and Answers (FAQs)**

**Q: What do you mean that bilingual staff can be trained as a by-product of this pilot project?**

**A: At APMC, many bilingual-designated staff have been providing language support for several years. The opportunity is now to upgrade their skills and to have continuing education on skills and knowledge that provide them with tools to participate in a most integrated function in today's healthcare system. Our ultimate goal is to provide quality patient care.**

# What real patients have said about VMI:

“Helping to see the interpreter makes it very personable...”

“Fast. At the touch of a button an interpreter is there...”

“You don’t have to wait...”

“I don’t need to bring a friend in the future...”

# What real patients have said about VMI:

When asked to compare VMI interpretation via computer with interpretation via phone, patients responded:

“I accept both, but prefer the computer.”

“Better than the phone...”

“Telephone did not feel secure... I like to see the interpreter to make sure they are saying what I am saying.”

# WEB SITES

[www.diversityrx.org](http://www.diversityrx.org)

[www.ncihc.org](http://www.ncihc.org)

[www.chia.ws](http://www.chia.ws)

[www.mmia.org](http://www.mmia.org)

[www.xculture.org](http://www.xculture.org)

[www.scatia.org](http://www.scatia.org)

[www.rid.org](http://www.rid.org)

[www.aapcho.org](http://www.aapcho.org)

[www.health-access.org](http://www.health-access.org)