



CHIA Newsletter

CHIA's Mission: Increase equal access to healthcare by developing and promoting the healthcare interpreting profession; advocating for culturally and linguistically appropriate services; and providing education and training to healthcare professionals.

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The California Endowment: Partner for Change

By Cynthia E. Roat, MPH

In 1996 Californians got a new friend, and they didn't even know it.

Blue Cross of California, one of the state's largest non-profit healthcare insurers, petitioned that year to become Well Point Health Networks, a for-profit insurance company. As a result of this transition, The California Endowment was born with \$3.4 billion in assets and a mission to "expand access to affordable healthcare for underserved individuals and communities and to promote fundamental improvements to the health status of all Californians."¹

Californians lost a health plan but gained a powerful ally in the fight for healthcare.

An Unusual Foundation

We all sort of know The California Endowment; it's a funding agency, it supports CHIA, it does a lot of good work. The Endowment is all that and more. It is a partner, one that responds to community concerns and supports community-based organizations. Multicultural health is its overarching theme. Its leadership sees cultural diversity not as a problem but as the state's untapped wealth, and communities not as deficient but as full of promise and strength. This orientation has set The California Endowment apart from many other funding agencies and has characterized the more than 2,800 grants that TCE has awarded over the past six years.

Overall, those grants support four strategic goals:

- (1) to increase the diversity and distribution of California's healthcare work force;
- (2) to increase the cultural competency and proficiency of California's health delivery systems;

- (3) to increase access to quality and affordable healthcare and services for underserved Californians;
- (4) to reduce disparities in health and promote improvements in the health and well-being among California's underserved populations.²

Considering its goals, it is not surprising that The California Endowment is one of the first, and certainly the major, private foundations to address issues of language access in the state of California. But how did decision makers at TCE come to focus their attention – and their money – on this important yet largely ignored area?

Simple. They listened.

In 1999, program officers at TCE listened to community leaders who told them that language was creating a major barrier for patients trying to access care. They listened to community advocates who told them that the few organizations focusing on providing interpretation services were overwhelmed. They listened to health experts who told them that the healthcare system overall had few resources or systems in place to deal with the demand. And in October of that year, the Endowment called a meeting and listened as an impressive array of knowledgeable people talked about the need for systemic and ongoing support for language access programs.

Where the Rubber Hits the Road

From that initial convening, a plan emerged within TCE to provide long-term support across a variety of programs with the goal of advancing and integrating language access into the workings of California's healthcare system. The focus

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CHIA Advocacy in the Policy Arena: A View From Sacramento by Paulo Juarez Pereira CHIA-Sacramento Advocacy Committee

What drives the healthcare of a nation is the way that nation perceives, understands, and takes care of the health-related needs of its population. The effective communication of health-related need is the most essential component of the medical encounter. In the new century, we are learning more and more that the way a person expresses a health-related need depends on that person's language, culture, ethnicity, and even national origin. Thus, an African-American person, a Native-American person, a person born in the Altiplano of Bolivia, or a person born in the reindeer pastures of Lapland will each understand, express, and expect care for his or her need in unique and perhaps very different ways.

The current healthcare system in the U.S.—including California—is not quite prepared to deal with the immense diversity in the United States in terms of language, culture, ethnicity, beliefs, and health practices. Therefore, advocacy is needed in the policy arena to bring the U.S. more in line with the reality of its cultural and linguistic diversity.

Why should interpreters care about advocacy in the policy arena? Well, think of it this way: how many times have you, as a healthcare interpreter, felt invisible in the three-way partnership between provider, patient, and interpreter? How many times have you felt that you don't exist or don't

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Letter from the President



CHIA president **Beverly Treumann** interpreting at UCLA Medical Center for Alba Leticia Alvarez, mother of conjoined twins separated in surgery on August 5, 2002. (Photo courtesy Amy Waddell, UCLA Medical Center; www.healthcare.ucla.edu.)

Your membership counts!

As I write this, I'm anticipating that this newsletter will be distributed and read at our very successful second annual conference. I have every reason to think we'll have a good turnout.

In February 2000, when CHIA first received a grant from The California Endowment, CHIA had just 48 members, 20 percent of whom were on the Board of Directors. In April of this year, membership stood at 280. In August, we hit 390. At this conference, we'll sign up yet more members.

What explains this significant increase in membership?

Despite six years of existence, people are only now beginning to hear about us. However, when they do, they quickly realize that CHIA is the state's sole non-profit organization that works to improve access to healthcare by supporting the emerging healthcare interpreting profession. Many interpreters, healthcare professionals, and language access advocates who learn about CHIA recognize in our mission shared goals. It's this mutual sense of purpose that attracts members.

What does CHIA do that keeps you involved?

- Networking via chapter activities, committees, and the annual conference.
- Participation in development of interpreter standards and eventual certification.
- Linkage with community organizations advocating for healthcare interpreting and access issues with government, providers, and the employers of interpreters.
- News of activities of related organizations.
- Access to up-to-date information on healthcare interpreting.

- A newsletter and website with interpreter resources.
- The satisfaction of being a part of the developing healthcare interpreting profession.

What does your membership mean to CHIA?

You are CHIA. We need your ideas, your expertise and your volunteered time. In addition, your member dues and donations are what demonstrate that CHIA is a publicly supported organization. Without public support, CHIA cannot call itself a non-profit tax-exempt organization. Without tax-exempt status, CHIA cannot go to The California Endowment or any other funder for support.

Please join CHIA if you support our mission of developing and promoting the healthcare interpreter profession, advocating for culturally and linguistically appropriate healthcare services, and providing education and training to healthcare professionals.

Those who join CHIA now will receive a special 14-month membership that will last through the end of 2003. Current members will receive a letter in November asking you for your renewal. Please make plans now to reply immediately. We want your dues to count in 2002. This income will be very important in helping CHIA to qualify for further foundation support. You can also help by making a personal tax-deductible contribution.

Cindy Roat writes in this issue that The California Endowment has a special interest in CHIA's success. We believe that you do too and that you'll renew your membership promptly and help convince others to join. Your active membership helps CHIA earn even greater support.

Thank you for your support!

Bay Area Chapter Report

By Margarita S. Bekker

Networking, New York, and bone marrow transplants were the topics of discussion at the June 22 meeting of the Bay Area chapter of CHIA. This was the first in a series of educational workshops planned by chapter chair **Rosario Nevado** and the members of the various committees.

The quarterly meeting, held at Stanford Hospital in Palo Alto, featured Ellen Smiley, R.N., who discussed bone marrow transplants: indications, disease classification, treatment course and prognosis. Participants received diagrams and mini-glossaries, and after the lecture, a lively question-and-answer session took place. The Bay Area chapter plans to have a guest speaker at every meeting to offer interpreters opportunities to increase their medical vocabulary and knowledge of health related topics.

Another special guest was Linda Haffner, the founding President of CHIA, who was visiting from New York. She discussed the status of interpreting in New York City, where hospitals commonly use volunteers to interpret. Such a set-up is not uncommon in many parts of the country, Ms. Haffner said, and could indicate growth potential for the field of professional medical interpreting. Ms. Haffner also addressed the importance of establishing a national organization for interpreters to increase their visibility and highlight their important role in the healthcare industry.

Following the presentations, meeting participants introduced themselves and shared the expectations that they had for CHIA. Some decided to become CHIA members on the spot. The meeting attracted a wide variety of people, including medical interpreters with years of experience, new graduates of Hispanic University, and interns from the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

At the end of the meeting participants discussed the educational mission of CHIA and an upcoming CHIA conference in Los Angeles on September 28. Several people from the Bay Area chapter are expected to attend.

The success of the June meeting could be measured by the learning and the networking that took place among the 18 attendees. Many enthusiastically stayed past CHIA's business portion to exchange experiences and practices, as well as to laugh and to enjoy the bagels and cream cheese.

The next chapter meeting will be held at Kaiser Hospital in Santa Rosa on Saturday, October 5th. For information, email rnevado@stanfordmed.org.

“Medical Interpreting, The New Emerging Profession”

Kaiser Permanente's interpreter conference

The healthcare industry in California is challenged to provide improved service to ethnically and culturally diverse communities in order to comply with changing demographics, state and federal policies and business opportunities. Kaiser Permanente Northern California Region is responding to these forces with new programs to promote service and access. In the last few years Interpreter Services Departments, as well as diverse call centers, have been developed in several Kaiser facilities. These innovative programs support the promise that Kaiser Permanente has issued to its members: to consistently provide high quality, affordable healthcare in an easy and convenient manner with a personal touch. And in all of these efforts, CHIA members are playing a vital role.

In its most recent initiative, Kaiser recently sponsored an interpreter conference, organized by CHIA members **Merry Zavala** and **Berta Bejarano**. The conference, entitled “Medical Interpreting, The New Emerging Profession,” took place on Saturday, June 29th in Oakland and was jointly sponsored by Kaiser Permanente Latino Association, Northern California Diversity Program, Fremont Facility, Santa Rosa Facility and the Santa Rosa Chapter of the Kaiser Permanente Latino Association. Berta Bejarano of Interpreter Services was Mistress of Ceremonies for the event, CHIA President **Beverly Treumann** spoke about CHIA's mission and **Ann Chun** reported on the California Standards of Practice now available on CHIA's website. **Rosario Nevado**, CHIA Bay Area chapter chair, staffed a table and signed up new CHIA members. Additional speakers included Gayle Tang, Kaiser's Director of National Linguistic and Cultural Programs; Carlos Vargas, also of National Linguistic and Cultural Services; Diona Cheng, Northern California Diversity Manager; Marcia Gomez, LCSW of the psychiatry department; and Merry Zavala, Lead Interpreter.

The core objective of this conference was to convene Kaiser staff and others of similar agenda in order to address the challenges involved in implementing culturally competent healthcare services and to share best practices.

An Eye To The Future: CHIA in the Coming Year

After a year of rapid growth, CHIA is now evaluating how to ensure our organization's sustainability while improving our capacity to serve healthcare interpreters and the healthcare industry at large. Key objectives have been identified for the coming year to help us reach these goals.



- NCIHC/MMIA/CHIA pilot of an interpreter certification program;
- Promotion of the CHIA Standards of Practice workshops;
- Advocacy for the field of healthcare interpreting;
- Third annual conference in Sacramento.

TCE (cont'd from pg. 1)

was on three basic areas: training, policy and systems change, and applied research. Instead of employing the complicated “request for proposal” process commonly used by large granting organizations, TCE asked people in the field who should be doing the work and reached out to offer support to groups and individuals that demonstrated capacity, vision, and a track record.

Here are some examples of programs The California Endowment has funded related to language access.

Training and Curricula Development

TCE listened and heard that training for interpreters was both vital and largely unavailable. The Endowment sought ways, then, to expand the availability of interpreter training around the state in a variety of venues.

- The San Francisco Bay Area Regional Health Occupations Resource Center (RHORC) and City College of San Francisco were funded to develop a program to train interpreter trainers and to disseminate City College’s healthcare interpreter training program throughout the California community college system.
- A collaborative of five community organizations (Asian Health Services, Healthy House, PALS for Health, Vista Community Clinic, and Clínicas de la Salud del Pueblo) was funded to develop a training program for healthcare interpreters, a training program for interpreter trainers, and a test of bilingual proficiency.

Policy and Systems Change

TCE listened and heard that training interpreters has no impact if institutions don’t use them. Public policy and provider attitudes need to change as well, and organizations that can carry on the work into the future need to be nurtured. The Endowment, then, sought to support grass roots organizations that would have an impact over the long term on policy and systems. These are some of the organizations that have been funded:

- The Asian Pacific Islander American Health Forum and its six partners advocate on a state and local level for policies that support language access programs.
- The California Academy of Family Physicians is hosting TCE’s Medical Leadership Council, a group organized to build provider and institutional support for language access programs.
- LA Care, a Medicaid managed care plan in Los Angeles county, was funded to conduct a cultural competency assessment of all its institutional members. LA Care will also develop a curriculum to teach administrators how to incorporate cultural competency into everyday decision-making, a curriculum for preparing bilingual clinic staff to interpret, and a curriculum for training providers in cultural competency. Finally, LA Care will do a needs-assessment of its enrollees.
- Scripps Health will conduct a wide range of language-related activities to increase access to its services.
- Saint Joseph Health System is developing and piloting an institutional assessment tool around language access and cultural competency.
- And, of course, CHIA received a grant from TCE which has allowed it to grow, establish regional chapters, run state-wide

and regional conferences and develop the CHIA Standards of Practice.

Applied Research

Finally, TCE listened and heard that much of what we think we know about interpreting comes from experience but has limited support in research. The Endowment wanted to help develop a research base for language access work. As a result, the following studies have been funded:

- a study through California State University at Long Beach on the impact on clinical outcomes of training interpreters.
- a study through Kaiser Permanente on:
 - a) the impact on clinical outcomes of having a comprehensive and integrated language access system;
 - b) development of a comprehensive Spanish-English medical translation glossary and a study of the accuracy and efficiency of computer-assisted vs. manual translation of healthcare materials;
 - c) development of a tool to assess the level of language proficiency of reportedly bilingual providers.
- a study through the New York University School of Medicine of remote simultaneous interpreting at Bellevue Hospital.
- a study at San Francisco General Hospital on two different disease management strategies, one involving interactive, technology-based communication, tailored to patients’ needs, and the other including patients in group medical visits with a personalized model designed to empower each individual.

A Special Relationship

The California Endowment is certainly a major source of funding for language access initiatives in the state. It also is willing to support fledgling organizations that other grantors might consider “risky.” CHIA is a good example. CHIA representatives were among those invited to the Endowment’s language access convening in 1999, when CHIA was just getting going. Convinced that a grass-roots interpreter organization could help improve the quality of interpreting from within the profession, TCE committed \$300,000 to help CHIA. One third of this amount was designated to fund institutional infrastructure, while the other two-thirds went to support the development of standards of practice and an interpreter certification program. The original two-year grant was extended for one additional year to allow CHIA to complete the standards and build a world-class website where this document can be downloaded for review (www.chia.ws). Throughout these three years the Endowment has been supportive, available and flexible.

Why would a large foundation provide this sort of support for a young organization such as CHIA? Robert Ross, the CEO of The California Endowment, had this to say about CHIA:

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Advocacy (cont'd from pg. 5)

programs that conference should have, in view of the conference location and CHIA's links to legislators.

One of the goals for CHIA's advocacy work is to establish an effective and swift communication channel with all members, statewide, as a means to support various kinds of advocacy initiatives. As of the writing of this article, Governor Gray Davis has on his desk Assembly Bill 2739, which takes existing cultural and linguistic

competency requirements in the Healthy Families and Medi-Cal managed care programs and sets them into law. CHIA has been very supportive of this bill as it went through various committees, both in the Assembly and in the Senate. Our advocacy goal is to make full use of CHIA's web site (www.chia.ws) and also to establish an effective communication channel with all CHIA members so that we can all be kept abreast of the latest

developments in the policy arena and also can respond swiftly when advocacy action is advised in terms of writing letters to the governor or to members of the Assembly or Senate. (See www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/bill/asm/ab_2701-2750ab_2739_bill_20020831_status.html).

And remember: advocacy takes vigilance and constant care — from us all. Thank you.

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Chapter Dates!

Bay Area meetings:
Sat., Oct. 5, 10:00A-NOON
at Kaiser Santa Rosa.
Sat., Dec. 7 (details coming).

CHIA-LA meetings:
9:30A-12:30P Sat., Oct. 26
@ 555 W. 5th St, Los Angeles.
Dec. 7 Holiday Brunch @ The Empress
Pavillion, downtown LA for dim sum.

Central Valley meeting:
Saturday, Dec. 7.
See website (www.chia.ws) for latest updates.



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