

inforMATION

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



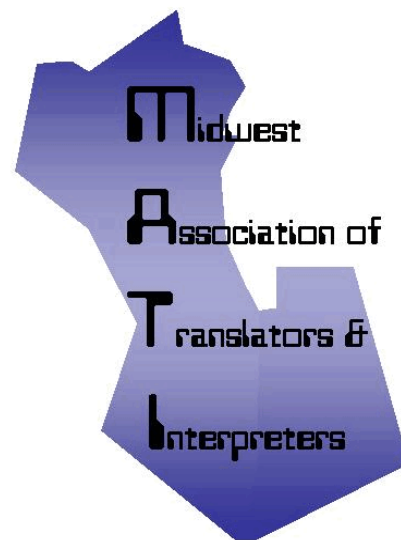
Dear MATI Members,

I hope this newsletter finds you doing well and enjoying the spring weather. As you have seen, in the past two months we had to cancel two MATI educational sessions in Wisconsin and Illinois due to lack of registration. We are looking to reschedule both events for later in the year. We will also try to get the word out better about those events.

If you have any suggestions regarding how to make events better, please do not hesitate to contact me at champlanguage@aol.com. I have started a group "Midwest Association of Translators & Interpreters" on LinkedIn. So far we have 13 members. If you are on LinkedIn, please join us.

Finally, please circle Saturday, September 12, on your calendar for the 6th Annual MATI Conference, to be held in Indianapolis. We are working toward putting together an exciting agenda that strives to benefit translators and interpreters at all experience levels.

Best Regards,
Di Wu
President



FROM THE EDITOR

Dear MATI Colleagues and Friends,



Spring has sprung in the MATI region, evoking a spirit of renewal and change. Now is the perfect time to take a more active role in our organization. There are many ways to get involved in MATI. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Help with registration at MATI events
- Participate on a MATI committee (Membership, Planning, Communication, Outreach)
- Write an article for the MATI newsletter
- Give a presentation about MATI and T&I professions to local students
- Run for a position on the MATI Board

On Saturday, June 13, MATI will hold its Annual Business Meeting at Buca di Beppo in Lombard, Illinois, just west of Chicago. All MATI members are welcome to join the Board for lunch at 11:00 a.m., followed by the meeting from 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

My term as MATI Secretary will end this summer and I felt it was a good time to also pass the torch as Newsletter Editor. It has been a pleasure to serve MATI in both capacities and I will continue to take an active interest in our ATA chapter. MATI member Alexis Pollitz has graciously volunteered to take over as Editor after the next issue. Thank you, Alexis!

Remember, this is *your* association. Let's use this season of change to reflect and rejuvenate, to keep MATI going strong.

With warm regards,

Sue Couture

WELCOME NEW MATI MEMBERS!

In Every Language	Margaret Barrales	Miranda Martinez-Cruz
Language Access Resource Center	Alp Berker	Naturaleza Moore
Metaphrasis Language & Cultural Solutions	Wallie Dayal	Sol Rodriguez
Schneck Medical Center	Isabel Fernandez	Rebecca Segura
Tatiana Alvarez	Olga Henry	Kelsey Smith
Aslan Aslanian	Marleen Julien	Tonja Stokes-Hanger
Tomáš Barendregt	Rosa Roberts	Eloise Sureau
	Ana Konrath	Nonna Working

HEALTH 101 FOR MEDICAL INTERPRETERS: STRESS AND HOW TO DEAL WITH IT

by Madalena Sánchez, *Interpreting Coordinator, In Every Language, LLC*

As medical interpreters, we frequently deal with patients who are stressed, physically or mentally ill, and some who are emotionally exhausted. However, we rarely take our own health and well being into account while on the job. We sit with patients in waiting rooms and exam rooms day in and day out, and in being faithful to our code of ethics, we make sure to refrain from becoming personally involved in the settings in which we interpret. When it comes to health, many medical interpreters tend to lose sight of their own personal health and how the work affects their well-being.

Assisting patients in various health care settings can be a stressful job—no matter what health care providers believe, we do more than just render diagnoses in the patient's language. As an interpreter knows, dealing with constantly changing assignments can be stressful, and sometimes, overwhelming. One has to make mental and physical changes for each and every case, while remaining alert at all times. We are expected to remain calm in situations where patients receive bad news or experience pain. Many times, although we try to remain at a mental and emotional distance from the patient, an interpreter may have to interpret something that causes him to remember an event or illness in his personal past. Depending on how similar the situation, an interpreter may experience secondary trauma, i.e. when one is affected by the trauma of another. In fact, one may have never had a similar experience as that of the one described, but it is possible to be affected by hearing or seeing another person's painful account.

Interpreters may also feel stress due to other factors unrelated to the actual interpretation of the appointment. When dealing with multiple appointments, it is not unusual to worry about being late for the next one. The lab tech seems to be moving particularly slowly today while drawing blood from the five people waiting in front of the limited English proficient (LEP) patient you are assisting, and you, as the interpreter, must not show your impatience with the situation. Ethically, you must remain transparent. Other times, health care providers have unrealistic expectations of interpreters. One should not be asked to help a patient fill out paperwork simply because the facility does not have paperwork in the patient's language. However, this task is often asked of interpreters. This is a case in which we as interpreters must educate those with whom we work. Moreover, an interpreter should never become involved in carrying out a procedure. For example, being asked to help restrain a screaming child receiving vaccinations can be stressful. As many nurses and doctors are now beginning to see more diverse populations, they are becoming familiar with the idea of working with interpreters. On the other hand, many still have unrealistic ideas of the interpreter's role.

One very common source of stress can come from the patient and his family. Just as some health care providers misunderstand the role we play, patients can feel a linguistic connection with those who speak the same language. Thus, a patient might ask his interpreter to give him a ride home after the

appointment or to come by on the weekend for his daughter's *quinceañera* celebration. The interpreter might feel awkward, but again, should refer to the code of ethics in these situations. It seems unkind to refuse to give the patient a ride home or to attend a gathering with his family, but again, the job doesn't come without a few stressful situations.

Family members of patients can create nerve-racking situations for the interpreter as well. In some instances, the entire family attends the doctor appointment and wishes to be present throughout the visit. This can cause complete chaos in a women's health appointment where there is a curtain drawn between the interpreter and the patient and health care provider. In these assignments, the interpreter must rely on his hearing to make sure he renders the message as accurately as possible. Add a crying child and a father who can't seem to calm the child, and the interpreter's job becomes extremely demanding.

Other times, an interpreter arrives at a facility and the patient has brought his own interpreter or a family member he prefers to use as an interpreter. Depending on how the facility deals with such situations, one might have to rearrange his schedule for the rest of the day. This can mean a loss of money and time. In some situations, family members involve themselves in the patient's care, answering questions for the patient or interrupting her to give the health care provider information. It can be difficult for the interpreter if the doctor or nurse fails to recognize the problem.

Giving bad news is another tense situation in many cases. Although we simply interpret the diagnosis, the patient might feel that the interpreter is the one giving the upsetting news and thus, direct his emotions toward the interpreter. It is often difficult to remain calm in such circumstances. In some cultures, the family members wish to know about such news before the patient. Even though the interpreter is aware of the other culture's beliefs, his hands are bound by HIPAA and a code of ethics. In areas of lesser language diffusion, it is not uncommon for interpreters to know members of the population whose language he speaks. Sometimes, family members or friends may want to discuss what happened in the medical appointment with the interpreter. In this way, the stress of our jobs can occur even outside the examination room.

It can be hard to deal with the stresses of interpreting as a profession, since many of us live in areas where our support network (other interpreters) is small. Also, we must always keep our code of ethics in mind, especially the responsibility to maintain confidentiality. Not being able to discuss a typical day at work can add to the already-building stress level of the job. Taking such scenarios into consideration, here are some ways to improve your health both as a current medical interpreter and in the future:

- Make sure to get enough sleep. By getting about 7-8 hours of sleep a night, you decrease stress levels and risk of disease, such as heart disease (allowing you more years to interpret or simply enjoy life!).
- Make time for activities that are completely unrelated to interpreting. These activities should be priorities, i.e. they should have just as much importance as one's work. We do not question getting up in the mornings and going to work because we need to work in order to maintain ourselves. Isn't it just as important to take time away from work in order to maintain our health?

- Make time to exercise at least three or four days a week. If you are looking for a good outlet for stress, exercise is one of the top ways to relieve stress and maintain a healthy lifestyle. When you exercise, you also improve cardiovascular health, allowing for your body to resist high levels of stress.
- Maintain a healthy diet of lean proteins, whole grains, and carbohydrates. Omega 3 fatty acids are essential to brain activity. Vitamin E, found in many types of nuts for example, can be helpful for brain activity as well.
- Join a group of local interpreters/translators. This will help you stay connected to the field and network with others that work in the same industry. They will be able to support you as well.
- Join professional organizations. These groups can help you to brush up on your skills and can be forums for topics of discussion.
- Educate others about the industry. Many times, doctors and patients ask unreasonable tasks of interpreters simply because they do not understand how to work with them. By educating others about our ethics and standards of practice we are teaching them ways to work with interpreters for future appointments, and hopefully making unreasonable expectations a less frequent stress factor in the long run.
- If you feel that you are becoming anxious during an appointment for any reason, remember to breathe deeply from the abdominal area. This will help you maintain your focus on the interpretation at hand.
- Learn to say “No.” It is perfectly reasonable for you to turn down a job if you have another commitment or need more rest. Simply ask the client to request your services again in the future. If you are unable to take an assignment because you do not think you could remain neutral throughout the interpretation, let the client know and offer to help find another qualified individual for the assignment.
- Realize that although stress comes with the job, you are providing a service to an LEP patient that is vital to their health care. You make a difference in this person’s health care experience.

In dealing with stress as an interpreter, remember one thing: if we are not healthy ourselves, how can we expect to do the best job possible for LEP patients and their health care providers? ■

Source: Bridging the Gap: A Basic Training for Medical Interpreters. (January 1999). The Cross Cultural Health Care Program.



VOICES FROM ALVERNO: STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON HEALTHCARE INTERPRETING

Alverno College is a small, liberal arts college for women located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with an enrollment of nearly 3,000 students and over 60 areas of study. In fall 2007, the World Languages Department launched the Spanish/English Healthcare Interpretation minor to meet the growing need for trained medical interpreters in area health care organizations. The program consists of 6 courses totaling 16 credits; five of them are core courses covering medical terminology, interpreter roles, ethics, standards of practice, and advanced linguistic practice. There is also a practicum/internship experience through which students gain on-site experience to enhance the skills they attained in the classroom. This program was initially designed to complement the nursing program; however, bilingual students from all disciplines are encouraged to participate. At present, community members may audit classes but plans to create a certificate program in the near future have also been discussed. For more information, please contact the program coordinator, Jennifer Flamboe, Assistant Professor of Spanish and Healthcare Interpretation at jennifer.flamboe@alverno.edu. ■

LETTERS FROM ALVERNO COLLEGE STUDENTS

Dear Editor,

I am a nursing major at Alverno College, with a minor in Spanish interpretation. Recently I enrolled in an ethics class that has become a big asset in my minor. The advantages of having this class are discussing ethical situations as well as discussing the importance of ethics. I have achieved in a variety of areas in terms of learning the importance of following standards of practice and how to incorporate ethics into the role of interpreting. My advice to students who are pursuing a career in interpreting is to make sure they incorporate a class on ethics because it is a course that will surely prepare them for their career.

Alma Padilla

Nursing Major at Alverno College

■ ■ ■

Dear Editor,

I recently read an article in your spring '08 inforMATION newsletter concerning possible national certification for healthcare interpreting. As a nursing student with a healthcare interpreting minor, I was very interested in this article. If national healthcare certification were to become a reality, this would be a great accomplishment. Yet, to try and establish one set of rules for

interpreters would be impossible. While healthcare interpreters are trained to interpret for non-English speaking patients, the environment in which they work establishes their visibility and the type of role they represent. For example, if you work for an on-call service and are sent to different hospitals, it is more difficult to establish rapport with the permanent employees there. Therefore, your position is less visible. Yet, if you work at a community clinic as a permanent employee, then your position is a lot more visible.

With this new certification that will hopefully become a reality, we will be recognized as professionals who are trained in providing non-English speaking patients with the best possible interpreting service. However, it needs to be recognized that there are many variations of interpreting service and that not everyone fits a specific mold. As a future nurse and interpreter, I wanted to comment on how much I have learned about the complexity of interpreting and how I respect those who are properly trained and provide the utmost quality of service. It gives me hope that someday healthcare interpreters will also be recognized as professionals.

Sincerely,

Blanca Quiles

Sophomore at Alverno College pursuing a bachelor's degree in nursing with a healthcare interpreting minor



Dear Editor,

Through my coursework on healthcare interpreting it has come to my attention that many providers across our nation do not provide properly trained interpreters due to expensive costs. Many doctors rely on hospital staff to interpret, but they have not yet realized the heightened risk of experiencing medical errors – errors that can cause life-threatening consequences for patients.

There are currently more than 46 million people in the United States whose primary language is not English, and about 21 million speak very limited English. I can definitely relate to these statistics because I come from a family that was raised in Mexico. Ever since I can remember, I have been interpreting for family members who only speak Spanish. I remember going to doctor visits with my mom and interpreting at an early age. I have enjoyed interpreting for friends and family and knew that one day I would like to work in a hospital setting interpreting for people, so I was thrilled when Alverno College decided to offer medical interpretation as a minor. At that time I did not understand the role of an interpreter. I would omit information that I felt too embarrassed to ask. If I knew the answer to one of the questions the doctor asked my family member, I felt free to answer the question rather than asking my family member first. Now I have learned the importance of having the knowledge and skills of a trained interpreter.

It is important for medical interpreters to join organizations such as the Midwest Association of Translators and Interpreters (MATI), California Healthcare Interpreter Association (CHIA),

International Medical Interpreters Association (IMLA), or the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC), to strengthen their knowledge and skills related to the profession and to learn new things in that area of study. I am grateful that these organizations exist because they help guide interpreters along the right track. These organizations also provide events and opportunities to meet with other professionals in the field and to network with each other.

I really want to thank MATI for promoting high standards of ethics and business practices and advocating for the rights and interests of professional translators and interpreters. It definitely makes a difference in the profession! I will continue to read future articles to enhance my knowledge about this field, enabling me to become a great healthcare interpreter in the future.

*Gratefully,
Gladys Roque*

*Gladys Roque is majoring in business and management,
with a minor in healthcare interpretation.*



SAVE THE DATE!

LUNCH WITH THE BOARD & ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

Saturday, June 13, 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Buca di Beppo Restaurant

90 Yorktown Road

Lombard, IL 60148

630.932.7673

www.bucadibeppo.com

RSVP to Patricia Gonzalez at gonzpat@aol.com by June 5.

ARTICLE REVIEW: INTERPRETING IN SMALL-GROUP BILINGUAL VIDEOCONFERENCES

by Emily Joy Sielen

We live in a technological age, where the face-to-face interactions are decreasing in nearly all aspects of personal and professional life. It is not surprising, then, that video-conferencing is also on the rise, and that interpreters are being called on to facilitate communication between remote parties. Interpreting in this setting poses unique challenges to the interpreter, which are discussed in Sabine Braun's article, *Interpreting in Small-Group Bilingual Videoconferences: Challenges and Adaptations*. In this Article, Braun not only outlines the challenges of videoconference (VC) interpreting, but also the ways in which interpreters adapt to compensate for them.

The specific arrangement studied by the author is that in which each member of the communication is in a separate geographical location and are communicating via ISDN channels. The challenges endemic to this mode of communication are decreased social presence, in which the interpreters find it difficult to "relate to the interlocutors", and experience earlier-onset fatigue, inconsistent sound quality stemming from hardware and software problems, communication difficulties relating to the combination of décalage (time-lag) and back-channel utterances, and the interpreter's tendency to take on the role of moderator, due to the primary parties' inability to solve their interaction problems.

The author, after observing a dozen case studies of these interactions, suggests some adaptations that could improve the quality of the interaction, such as giving the interpreters more technological control over the interaction, including volume controls, mute buttons, and thus the ability to interpret simultaneously to decrease confusion caused by extreme time-lags, and anticipatory monitoring, which allowed the interpreters to communicate clearly that a response was about to begin, to prevent the other party from interrupting with clarification of the question. The author states that feelings of remoteness and alienation did not decrease with the interpreter's experience in VC communication, unlike the other challenges mentioned above. This issue merits further research.

As the technology used for VC communication improves, many of these challenges will likely diminish. Yet it is valid for interpreters of all stripes to consider the ways that decreased social presence or remoteness from the interlocutors affects their efficacy, and what adaptations are possible to overcome the disconnect. ■

Source: Braun, S. (2007). Interpreting in small-group bilingual videoconferences: Challenges and adaptation processes. *International Journal of Research and Practice in Interpreting*, 9(1), 21-46.

Emily Joy Sielen is a student of Art Therapy and Healthcare Interpreting at Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She graduates in December 2009 and hopes to pursue a career in mental-health interpreting.

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MATI, a chapter of the American Translators Association (ATA), was established in 2003 as a non-profit organization by and for translators and interpreters in the states of Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin, to promote the recognition and advancement of translation and interpretation as professions. For more information about our organization, please visit our web site at www.matiata.org.

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SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

We encourage our members to actively contribute to *inforMATION*. We ask that you submit items of interest in the fields of translation, interpretation, and languages. Below is a list of submission types we accept:

- comments on issues within the profession
- letters to the editor
- biographies
- book reviews
- Q&A
- summaries of monthly meetings
- announcements such as awards, job opportunities, weddings
- announcements of events relating to the profession

Maximum length for features is 2500 words. Photographs and graphics in the form of .gif or .jpeg are also accepted.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES:

- February 1 for the Winter issue
- May 1 for the Spring issue
- August 1 for the Summer issue
- November 1 for the Fall issue

Microsoft Word files may be sent as e-mail attachments, with clearly labeled e-mail subjects. File extensions (*.rtf or *.doc) should be added to short file names. Do not send files with *.exe extensions. Please add a title and author's name inside the word file—please do not put it only in the e-mail. Add 3-4 lines of biographical information at the end of the article.

Submit articles to the Editor, Alexis Pollitz, at apollitz@gmail.com. The editor reserves the right to edit each article.