

Ad Hoc Interpreters: A Risk in the Clinical Setting

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Ad Hoc vs. Qualified Interpreters:

- Ad Hoc Interpreters are untrained. They are often a family member or friend, and are generally used out of convenience or perceived efficiency.
- Qualified interpreters have trained as interpreters and generally hold certifications.
 - ASL Certifications include: NIC, NIC Advanced or Master: RID, CI, CT, IC/CT, CSC, SCL or MSCS; NAD Level IV or V, ACCI Level IV or V; Texas BEI-3 and higher.
 - Spoken language certifications include: CCHI or CMI national certification, endorsements from the NCHI or NBCM. Note: not all world languages have certifications available.

Legislation Surrounding the Use of Ad Hoc Interpreters:

- There are several laws that state that qualified medical interpreters must be used in a clinical setting. Those laws include The Hill Burton Act of 1946, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act.

Risks Surrounding the use of Ad Hoc Interpreters:

- General Risks:
 - No formal training/may lack relevant medical vocabulary.
 - If the ad hoc interpreter is a patient's family member or friend, there may be emotional involvement.
 - An ad hoc interpreter is not likely to understand when it is appropriate to interrupt the healthcare provider for clarification.
 - There may be a conflict of interest.
- Clinical Risks:
 - A recent study errors in medical interpretation found that interpretation errors are more common when an ad hoc interpreter is used.
 - Also, the errors committed by ad hoc interpreters were significantly more likely to lead to clinical consequences.
 - Another study found that clinicians were much more satisfied after communicating with an LEP patient through a trained interpreter as compared to an ad hoc interpreter.
 - A systematic literature review found that the quality of care offered to LEP patients is generally inferior when ad hoc interpreters are used.
 - The use of professional interpreters is also linked with shorter length of stays and reduced readmission rates.

Key Points to Remember:

- Short never means easy, easy never means short.
- Studying a language is NOT the same as studying to be an interpreter (this is like saying that someone took four years of biology and therefore they are now a doctor).
- No one means to offer bad communication, but it is a sadly common reality.