

PARTNERING WITH INTERPRETER SERVICES IN THE PERIOPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT TO IMPROVE SAFETY AND QUALITY OF CARE TO PATIENTS AND FAMILIES WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

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Background Information: In our increasingly multicultural society, health care providers must identify and address the needs of patients/families with limited English proficiency. Language barriers jeopardize patient safety and compromise quality of care. This can lead to lack of understanding of the surgical consent and treatment plan, increased risk of medical errors, readmissions due to misunderstanding of discharge teaching, and inability to effectively partner with families.

At the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia there is a detailed Language Services policy as well as in-house and/or phone interpreters available 24/7. Despite these specified resources, hospital staff may justify lack of adherence to the policy by citing time constraints, unfamiliarity with accessing interpreter services, a belief that it is acceptable for one parent to interpret for the other or that a parent's (or staff's) basic language skills are adequate without using trained interpreters

Objectives of Project: To develop a partnership with the hospital's Language Services Department in order to decrease discrepancies in care due to language barriers.

Process of Implementation: Multidisciplinary initiatives streamlined and simplified the process. Ascom phones (on site wireless telephone and messaging systems) were already widely used throughout the hospital. Dedicated phones were implemented for both "Interpreter-Spanish" and "Interpreter-Arabic" which are manned daily and whose numbers are programmed into PACU staff phones. The number of Interpretalk® phones providing over-the-telephone interpretation was increased for use in instances when an in-person interpreter is not feasible. Lastly, a partnership was formed with the Patient Safety Officer to educate the physician staff and reinforce the legal and moral obligation to communicate with families in their preferred language.

Statement of Successful Practice: Strategies employed to improve the ease of access to interpreters increases compliance, safety and family-centered care for families with limited English proficiency.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: Having language resources in place does not guarantee its use so the process of obtaining an interpreter needs to be as simple as possible. Developing strategies in partnership with the hospital's Language Services Program improves safety and quality of care of patients/families with limited English proficiency.