

No Longer Lost in Translation

By Michelle Brubaker | May 15, 2014

When a 21-year-old patient recently visited the UC San Diego Health Emergency Department, he needed an interpreter to be his voice while communicating with his physician. Born deaf, the young man uses American Sign Language (ASL), and on this day, he was able to describe his condition to his medical team with the help of an interactive video interpreter system called MARTTI, which immediately provides a patient with a professional interpreter via a computer monitor, much like Skype.

MARTTI (My Accessible Real-Time Trusted Interpreter), developed by Language Access Network, is a HIPPA-approved, two-way video and audio wireless connection to a skilled, certified medical interpreter. This method of interpretation, which allows the interpreter, patient and physician to see each other, provides access to interpreters for more than 150 languages, 31 video language interpreters, including ASL, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Health care providers use a video monitor for face-to-face communication. By simply pushing a button on the screen and asking the operator for the desired language, patients will be able to connect with an interpreter in less than 30 seconds.

“The deaf community uses this type of technology on a daily basis, so my son was familiar with this type of environment, which is convenient and reassuring as the parent of a child in need of these services,” said the patient’s father.



UC San Diego Health is using MARTTI to better serve our diverse patients from hundreds of countries who speak many different languages. MARTTI is in addition to UC San Diego Health’s five on-site Spanish language interpreters and a 24-hour language line - an interpretation phone service that is available 24 hours a day, year-round in more than 200 languages.

“MARTTI gives our health care providers and patients another vehicle to break down language barriers while being treated,” said Belinda Hein, director of Risk Management and Interpreter Services at UC San

Health System. “The population of individuals who speak limited or no English is growing rapidly.

Language interpretation services are critically important in the hospital setting - a misinterpretation between a health provider and a patient can be a matter of life and death. MARTTI has served to improve and increase the timely delivery of care."

[Vaishal Tolia, MD, MPH](#), assistant clinical professor with University of California, San Diego School of Medicine says MARTTI is helpful because of the face-to-face interaction patients receive and the ability for interpreters to view non-verbal cues, such as hand gesturing and facial expressions.

"These communication enhancements are not possible with the traditional phone interpreter model. The new equipment increases the speed at which interpretations can be made, which can be vital in an emergency room setting," said Tolia, director of Observation Medicine and associate medical director with the Department of Emergency Medicine at UC San Diego Health. "MARTTI devices are also on rolling stands, making it possible for one interpreter to stay with patients as they progress to different parts of the hospital."

To date, MARTTI has served 5,845 patients and has proven to be a successful addition to UC San Diego Health's language interpretation services.

"We are proud to serve all of our patient demographics in the community with a comfortable and positive experience while receiving the highest quality of care," said Hein.

Non-emergency patients are encouraged to request MARTTI or any other interpretive services while scheduling an appointment.
