



A message from the IMIA President.

May 18, 2020

Dear fellow interpreters,

I hope this message finds you well in company of your loved ones.

During these unprecedented times we have seen how our lives have changed overnight and how we are trying to adjust to our new normal. The IMIA Board of Directors and our staff have been monitoring the pandemic very closely. My team and I are working every day to find ways to assist you during this uncertain time.

Early on the pandemic, we received multiple concerns from interpreters working on the front lines at hospitals and clinics who were not having access to personal protective equipment (PPE) and who had observed the lack of provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate services to our most vulnerable populations such as the limited English proficient population and people with disabilities. For that reason, we sent a letter directly to President Trump expressing our concerns. Although we have not received a response to our letter, we feel optimistic that we have generated enough attention amongst hospital administrators and language service providers. New reports from interpreters say they are being afforded PPE just as any other member of the health care profession. Your voices have been heard loud and clear.

We are aware that our face-to-face interpretation modality is no longer the preferred method of communication and the industry is changing to remote interpreting by phone, video, or secured online video conference. Interpreters have asked to get training in these new modalities and on how to set up a home office. We are currently working to set up training and guidelines to address this directly. There is also the concern of unemployment or underemployment generated by the pandemic that has affected many of us in many ways. In this area, IMIA has sent you timely information about how to apply for the benefits the CARES Act has to offer.

In an effort to have a coordinated response to all the issues expressed above, I have activated the IMIA COVID-19 Task Force™. The Task Force was activated on April 22, 2020. The IMIA COVID-19 Task Force™ is charged with developing policies and guidelines to safeguard the medical interpreting profession, and your financial, emotional, and occupational safety. In addition, IMIA will assist in the communication needs of LEP, Deaf, Hard of Hearing communities, and people with access and functional needs with official information from the Center for Disease Control on how to protect themselves and others and will research professional occupational hazards.

We are fortunate to have assembled a team of dedicated subject matter experts from diverse backgrounds and representing several states. They are working interpreters, translators, former Officers of the US Armed Forces, researchers, physicians, a Fire Chief, and other highly skilled



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individuals who are helping the IMIA and its efforts to confront the pandemic's effects to our profession. We are finding ways to tackle the immediate, intermediate, and long-term needs of interpreters across the United States and its territories. We are also providing technical support to our international chapters. Our main goal is to support the medical interpreting profession and the industry during the response and the recovery phase of the pandemic, including after the emergency orders are lifted.

We have five sub-committees working on professional development, occupational hazards and interpreter's safety, research, community outreach, and in the development of the interpreter's emergency assistance fund. We are moving as fast as we can to have all the pieces of the puzzle together and we are confident that with your active participation we will be able to reach our goals. Since the activation of the Task Force, we have been meeting weekly to analyze the situation, have collected information from many sources, and we are planning our next strategies. Therefore, we would like to invite you to visit our official IMIA- COVID -19 Task Force™ webpage located at this link: <https://www.imiaweb.org/content/covid-19-task-force/>

This is a work in progress and more information will be added in the resource section as it becomes available. In the next few weeks, you will receive invitations to complete a few surveys that are brief and anonymous to assess your needs and know your priorities. The information collected will guide us as to where we can concentrate our energies to try to make your life a little easier.

Please join us to a meet and greet conversation that we will have soon, where you will have the time to hear what we are doing and ask questions or give recommendations.

In closing, I would like to encourage you to take care of your physical and emotional wellbeing as they go hand in hand. If you feel overwhelmed, call a friend, or a person that you trust, use one of the coping with stress techniques that one of our presenters taught us during a live webinar, and rest assured that you are not alone. The IMIA cares about you and your profession. We value your service to our LEP communities, as you are an essential worker for the communication between our LEP patients and health care professionals.

Be well, my friends, be healthy, follow the social distancing measures, wear face masks, wash your hands often and follow any other recommendations given by your local health authorities. We look forward to continuing to work with you.

All the best,

Dr. David Cardona, MD, MPH, CMI-Spanish
IMIA President