

Presenting to you yet another outstanding interview with Susan Prieto, Interpreter Services Coordinator of Mt. Auburn Hospital, in Cambridge Ma.

Thank you Sue for doing an excellent job everyday!

Cynthia M. Schenck
CEO Medical Interpreters of the North Shore
IMIA Board Director
IMIA ISP Division Journalist

1. Tell me about your business, how/why/when did it begin?

Given that Massachusetts implemented the ERIL (Emergency Room Interpreter Law), and in addition, recognizing the growing need to serve our LEP patient population, Mount Auburn Hospital created an Interpreter Services Department in 2000. I was hired to coordinate the service.

2. What is your core business (primary product or service) and who is your consumer?

Medical interpreters at Mount Auburn are committed to helping LEP patients communicate with their providers, understand their care plan and navigate through the system of ancillary care, follow up and establishment protocols.

3. What is the greatest challenge MAH faces in providing consistent and competent quality service?

One of our main challenges as a teaching hospital is ongoing staff education. Another significant challenge is how to meet the language needs of emerging immigrant populations. There is a period of time during which a demand for a specific language is increasing but not at the threshold which would support a part time or full time employee. Telephonic interpretation is available to all our patients yet we strive to provide interpretation in our most commonly requested languages with face to face interpreters.

4. How does MAH recruit interpreters?

All of our medical interpreters need to pass a third-party assessment test whereby they are graded on their skills and competency in accuracy, register and medical terminology. They are also queried on the complete Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the IMIA. They must pass these two evaluations before they are hired.

5. What type of training do you require of your interpreters?

With our more commonly spoken languages, there is an expectation that an interpreter applicant has successfully completed a medical interpreter training course. We recognize that these courses do not provide complete course work for rarer languages. In those cases we require the overview that is applicable to all languages. All new hires are shadowed for a period of time to ensure that they become familiar with the hospital protocols and comport themselves appropriately and professionally in the field.

6. What are your most frequently requested languages?

Out top three requested languages are Spanish, Portuguese and Armenian.

7. What technology has MAH found most effective in managing business?

Maintaining our database is paramount to understanding our language needs and managing our scope. Quality conference phones mounted on small IV poles ensure that telephonic language encounters are easily heard and understood by all parties. Available in all patient care areas, these Interpreter Phone on Poles or I-POPS provide the mechanism for accessing interpreter services within minutes 24/7.



8. What specifically have you done to enhance and improve the sector?

Interpreter Services partners with our Community Health Department in outreach programs aimed at educating immigrant populations and reducing health disparities. Additionally the Interpreter Department trains Harvard Medical School students on how to work with Interpreters in clinical settings.

9. Has MAH had the opportunity to give back to the community?

Working to improve the health of Immigrants is a priority for our Community Health Department. Activities including providing funding through our local Community Health Network Area to train bilingual employees at a community health clinic in interpretation, and the translating and printing of "Let's Move" brochures into Spanish.

10. How do you see your role within IMIA as an IMIA ISP member?

We have always strongly supported the IMIA as an important and critical organization for the profession of medical interpreters. We recognize its' breadth and scope and the amazing job this organization has done to encourage and support interpreters. It has forged new ground in the establishment of national certification thereby bringing medical interpreting as a profession into the light of day.

11. Is there anything else you would like to share about MAH?

Mount Auburn is committed to maintaining a caring and compassionate mode of service to all of our patients. It continually strives to improve culturally competent medical care and lessen medical disparities to the all of the patient populations that it serves.