



## Oklahoma Forum Raises Awareness about Language Access in Health Care

Tulsa, Oklahoma, August 29, 2011 – The IMIA Oklahoma Chapter Forum on Language Access, took place Saturday, August 27th, 2011, from 9am - 12pm at Tulsa Community College, Metro Campus. Welcome Remarks were given by Dewey Bartlett, Jr. , Mayor of Tulsa and Linda Thomas, M.Ed. , Director of the Office of Minority Health (OMH).

This was set up as a public forum to discuss issues related to language access in healthcare in the State of Oklahoma. There were over 100 attendees at this pioneering forum in Oklahoma. *“This was a great opportunity for those from Oklahoma who are language access advocates in the medical interpreting field to gather and learn more about these important issues. There is still much work to be done, so we need to coordinate our efforts and take advantage of this momentum,”* stated Tina Peña, Oklahoma Chapter Representative. The event has as its main topics discussions on how to ensure language access for language minority patients, how to provide linguistically and culturally appropriate language service, and the risks of miscommunication as this is a patient safety issue

IMIA Oklahoma Chapter Forum attendees earned CEUs from several organizations such as the IMIA, ATA and RID. Lola Bendana President of IMIA, President Multi-Languages Corporation & Vice Chair AILIA, spoke of the professionalization of Medical Interpreters. *“ Medical interpreters have come a long way in their professionalization efforts, and it is important that the public know the risks of miscommunication when working with non professional medical interpreters,”* Bendana pointed out. Tina Peña-TCC Associate Professor , IMIA Oklahoma Chapter Rep, and board member of the National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters presented on National Certification for medical interpreters and the New Standards from the Joint Commission to take effect January 1, 2012. *“Healthcare organizations seem much more aware of the need to verify interpreter qualifications and comply with TJC new standards on patient provider communication,* said Peña. Diana Higgins, Community Relations Manager at Total Source for Hearing-loss and Access, and RID and QAST certified, spoke on the Current Reality for Sign Language Interpreters, who have been required to be certified for over three decades. *“We’ve got a head start on certification, but we’re constantly working to raise the bar and increase professionalism,”* said Higgins. *“Sadly, we still hear stories from our deaf consumers of problems that occur when a certified interpreter was NOT provided. We have to continue to educate healthcare workers on the dangers of miscommunication.”*

Other activities took place adjacent to this forum to raise the awareness of this issue with the Hispanic population. The *Temas in Tulsa* program interviewed IMIA President Lola Bendana on Friday August 28<sup>th</sup>. Here is the link to the last *Temas en Tulsa*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwnkiXFKkZM>. A public service announcement was developed as well to provide public awareness to the rights of language minority populations that might require the service of medical interpreters and not know that it is mandated by law. This psa can be found at [http://www.imiaweb.org/uploads/pages/535\\_2..mp3](http://www.imiaweb.org/uploads/pages/535_2..mp3). You can also see it on youtube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFIQHsR-2yQ>.

### About the International Medical Interpreters Association (IMIA)

The International Medical Interpreters Association (IMIA) is an umbrella association that promotes all standards and best practices in the field of medical interpreting. The IMIA mission is to lead the advancement of professional medical interpreters worldwide. As an international trade association of medical interpreters, it represents over 2,000 practicing medical interpreters as the ultimate experts in

medical interpreting and as the best option for equitable care for minority language patients around the world. It promotes language access as a human right. It is the only national trade association of medical interpreters in the US, and is an official active member of FIT, the Federation of Interpreters and Translators, an international organization comprised of trade associations of interpreters and translators worldwide. It is a partner member of AILIA, the Languages Industry Association, headquartered in Canada. IMIA developed the first code of ethics, standards, educational workshops, events, and certification for medical interpreters and continues to be a pioneer in the field with its recent work to develop the first Interpreter Educators Code of Ethics and National Education Registry. The IMIA contains the only free international registry of medical interpreters, where they can be found by language, state, or country. Some of the current work involves expanding national and international chapters, developing a Leadership Academy for Language Access, and an Accreditation Council for Medical Interpreter Education. ([www.imiaweb.org](http://www.imiaweb.org))