

I am pleased to present another ISP interview with Angela Frentress Manager of Interpreter and Translation Services at Yale New Haven Hospital. Thank you Angela for a very interesting history and an excellent interview.

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

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

This is a brief history of YNHH Interpreter Services:

In the 80's and 90's, several bilingual employees and volunteers served as unofficial interpreters. The Public Relations Department kept a list of these employees and volunteers.

During those years, the hospital forms a committee to look at the need of interpreters. The director of our department leads the effort to develop a program.

In 1995 the first interpreter coordinator is hired. In 1999, the first official interpreter is hired. In 2003, the first dispatcher is hired. Today Interpreter Services has 3 dispatchers, 27 interpreters (Spanish, Arabic, ASL, Portuguese and French), 2 coordinators, one Deaf and Hard of Hearing coordinator and a Translation coordinator, and 1 manager.

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

We provide interpreter services to ensure equal communication access to LEP patients. We provide these services in 3 ways: in person, over the phone and VRI. YNHH believes that in person interpretation is the best way to provide interpreting services. We also provide translations of vital documents, patient education materials and discharge instructions in our top languages.

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

Regarding the provision of quality Interpreter Services to LEP patients, our main challenges are meeting the high demand of interpreting services for LEP patients and the provider's education about the correct use of interpreters to deliver the best patient care.

4. How does YNHH recruit qualified and competent Interpreters?

Through a selective screening of applicants based on education (Bachelors degree required), training (formal medical interpreting training of 40 hours or more) and experience (at least one year of medical interpreting). Applicants need to pass the YNHH interpreter screening test with a score of 80%. New interpreters receive an extensive in house training and feed back. All interpreters receive continuing education. More recently we are requiring national certification to medical interpreters who have been working with YNHH for more than one year. At this moment, more than 50% of our Spanish interpreters are nationally certified. This will be a general requirement in the next few years.

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

A 48 hours or more course of General Medical Interpreting Training from an accredited organization or the 48 hours training provided at YNHH.

We also require interpreters to assist to workshops provided by our department and to assist when possible to an Annual Medical Interpreter Conference.

6. What are the top three languages most requested?

Spanish, Arabic, and American Sign Language.

7. Has YNHH found any particular technology effective in managing business?

Phone interpretations and Video Remote Interpretations. We are currently looking into a new dispatching system to improve efficiency.

8. Has YNHH been able to give back to the community in any specific way?

YNHH is always very involved in serving the community participating in projects that promote health, education and access to health care of the most needed population. Interpreter Services are always involved in Health, Career Fairs and other community events.

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

My role is mainly as a learner from other Medical Centers that provide excellent Interpreter Services to their patients. I am eager to learn best practices and implement new approaches. Like wise, I can share my expertise with other managers and administrators, since YNHH has one of the best Interpreter Services in the country and I feel very proud of the constant effort of our department to raise the bar.

10. Is there anything else you would like us to know about your service?

The constant strive for excellence. We developed work groups that involve all the interpreters, coordinators and dispatchers to improve the whole scope of our services, from interpreter training, continuing education, to looking into new technology to serve more efficiently more patients.