



March 24, 2015

INTERPRETERS IN THE HEALTH SECTOR: THE PANCANADIAN PICTURE

Study Objective

- To describe the state of the job market
 - Interpretation services in health
 - Interpreting jobs
 - Francophone use of services
- To propose paths for the future





Interpretation – Why?

- The purpose of health interpretation services is to support health institutions and the teams of health professionals in their communications with patients.
- They are one of the basic terms of linguistic accessibility
- Clear communication between the health professional and the patient/client taking the person's language and culture into account makes it possible to improve:
 - Quality of services;
 - Patient safety;
 - Efficiency and effectiveness (break down language barriers);
 - Patient satisfaction;
 - Health management ability (individual and community).



Interpretation services in Canada

Findings

Meeting the needs of a diverse immigrant population

- Growing cultural and linguistic diversity
- Little geographic concentration of languages

Halifax (NSIS)	Montreal (BII)	Toronto (LHIN)	Winnipeg	Vancouver
Arabic	Spanish	Italian	Nepalese	Punjabi
Nepalese	Chinese	Chinese languages	Somali	Mandarin
Mandarin	Arabic	Cantonese	Tygrinia	Cantonese
Cantonese	Vietnamese	Punjabi	French (7.8%)	
Farsi	Punjabi	Portugese	Cantonese	French (0.5%)

- Mother tongue or official language criterion

Regionalization of interpretation services

- Better overall understanding of the communication-related issues of quality, safety, and risk management
- More interpretation services at the regional level or under a regional authority
- Moving the interpretation services offered in hospitals (bilingual employees, volunteers, family, etc.) to interpreter banks (regional, provincial or local)
- Greater availability of telephone interpretation services

The table summarizes the level of interpretation services.

	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	PEI	NS	NL	YK	NT	NU
Provincial model	X	X		X				X					
Regional model			X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	
Other and local					X	X							X

More services by telephone



- Growing share of the market
- Mainly provided by major US or Canadian companies.
 - LanguageLine Solutions, CanTalk
- Efficiency, ease of use and quick access to a number of languages 24/7
- Automation + technological advancements = more telephone interpretation services
 - Proven technology
 - Resources can be networked and group purchases make economies of scale possible
 - On-line request for workers and clients



Shrinking in-person services

- 50 interpreter positions were cut in Alberta
- Demographics + geography = in-person interpretation services more costly
 - Lack of linguistic concentration in institutions
 - Difficult to provide in-person interpretation services at a reasonable cost
 - Travel time for in-person interpreters to health institutions in a large city
 - Interpreters' travel to the suburbs and more remote regions
- Disparity in services depending on place of residence



Types of service

- By telephone – *Definitely increasing*
- In person – *steady or shrinking*
- By video-conferencing – *On the way and promising*
- In the home – *infrequent or decreasing*
- Appointment making service, reminder and follow-up (telephone) – *more in community organizations*
- Attendant, coordinator, navigator, and other models



Interpretation service costs

- Interpretation services are generally **free** for health system users in Canada
 - When they are required at the request of health professionals or workers
 - At the specific request of a user in the context of interacting with the health system.
- Certain individuals may seek an interpreter of their choice and must bear the costs
- Rates in person: \$40 to \$50 per hour
- Rates over the telephone: \$1.50 to \$8 per minute

Funding for interpretation services

- Various approaches:
 - Free for institutions and some professionals (AB, MB);
 - Full responsibility of the institution or professional (QC, NS);
 - Group rates for a number of suppliers at the regional or provincial level (Toronto);
 - Pooling of historic budgets and free services for participants (BC);
 - Services temporarily or permanently subsidized (ON).



Interpreters: Areas of expertise and service models

- Various ways to define and group the services provided by interpreters, i.e.:
 - By the interpreter's area of expertise;
 - By interpretation service delivery models;
 - By other hybrid models that include interpretation.
- Community interpreters are on the upswing in Canada
 - Expanded role compared to the medical interpreter model
 - Presence within community organizations
 - Practice standards

Other models integrating interpretation

Public

- French language and interpretation services coordinator (NS, NWT, YK)
- Liaison officer (QC)
- Clerk-interpreter (NU)

Community

- Interpreter-attendant (ON)
- Attendant (AB)
- Cultural interpreter – not listed
- Cultural mediator — not listed
- *These models are intended not only for interpretation but for the coordination of services and adapting medical information for the patient.*



Policies and standards

- Main objectives
 - To create a framework for the use of interpreters in the health setting
 - To support the implementation of high-quality, safe, and efficient interpretation services
 - To reduce risks related to language barriers
- Terminology, content, scope, definitions vary from one province/region to another
- A reference tool: The National Standard Guide for Community Interpreting Services published by the Healthcare Interpretation Network (2007)



Eight ethics principles

1. Accuracy and faithfulness
 2. Confidentiality
 3. Impartiality
 4. Respect of individuals
 5. Maintaining the boundaries for the role
 6. Accountability
 7. Professionalism
 8. Ongoing professional development
- 

In short: Interpretation services in Canada

- **By the public health systems**
 - Provincial or regional interpretation and translation services (interpreter banks)
 - Community immigrant assistance organizations, under contract with the health system
 - Private companies providing language services under contract with the health system
 - Health institutions and others
- **By community organizations**
 - Community immigrant assistance organizations
 - Community organizations providing assistance to Francophones
- **By private organizations or companies**

Overview of the provinces and territories



“[translation] The availability of professional medical interpreters in no way relieves health organizations of their obligation to promote a range of initiatives intended to increase linguistic and cultural diversity within the health professions.”

“...one cannot provide true equitable access by relying solely on interpreters to bridge the communication and cultural gaps for practitioners or service providers that may be culturally unresponsive or uninformed...”

(Stevens, 1993a; James, 1998; Doyle et Visano, 1987)



Interpreters

Employers and jobs

Main employers



Nova Scotia Interpreting Services



Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
Office régional de la santé de Winnipeg
Caring for Health À l'écoute de notre santé

Salaries: 2013 Canadian job market

- Job titles of Translator, Interpreter and Terminologist (NOC 5125)
 - Median wage is from **\$23.08 to \$33.40** per hour
 - Typical annual salary for a full-time employee is from \$45,000 to \$55,000
- There will be adequate numbers of jobseekers in this profession in the future
- Use of technology will limit growth
- One in three available jobs will be the result of an increase in demand

Source: Livingin-Canada.com



Jobs

- Jobs are mainly **free-lance** or **on-call**
 - Very few regular positions with the employment benefits of public health system jobs
 - Number of hours not guaranteed
- Entry-level positions for new arrivals or foreign health professionals
- Work for retirees or people wishing to supplement their base income
- Call centre positions
- Few positions in French, few requests for services in French
- Interpreters often have another job.



Jobs (cont.)

- The interpreter may also be called upon to perform other linguistic services tasks (translation, making appointments, etc.)
- Certification processes are not standardized nationally
- Skills vary and the potential volume of interpretation per interpreter may be a challenge for maintaining language and interpretation skills
- Certification of the interpreters working for major firms is these firms' responsibility



Use by Francophones

- Very low use of interpretation services by Francophones
 - *Also true for Anglophones in Quebec*
- The health system seldom integrates interpretation services into a structured offer of services in French to official language minority communities
 - Accès linguistique in Manitoba has developed an algorithm specific to services in French.
 - Provincial Language Services of British Columbia has a division devoted to services for Francophones.
- *A number of Francophones prefer to use basic English rather than an interpreters' service*

Statistics

Province	# of requests	# in French	%	# of FR interpreters
MB (2013/2014) Winnipeg	14,739 per year	1157	7.8%	8
BC (2013/2014) Province	102,809 per year	605	0.5%	7
NS (2012) Halifax	1,076	3-10 per month	-	6-8
NWT Yellowknife	50 per year	50	100%	5-7
AB (indéterminée)	1,400 per month	Fewer than 10 per month	-	0
QC (2012/2013) Montréal	35,900 services rendered (Interpretation and translation)	Very rare for OL (Eng. In QC)		0
L'accueil Francophone de Thunder Bay	3,307 service requests	3,700	100%	2



Some paths for the future

Interpretation services

- Speed up implementation of the technological means for interpretation through video conferencing
 - Bring the human aspect back into the interaction
- Targeted linguistic services in health for official language minority communities

Training

- Develop training for health professionals called upon to act as interpreters or to work with interpreters
- Mental health interpreters, a specialization that could be developed, most particularly for services in French!

Services in French

- Increase the creation of hybrid positions integrating service coordination functions, liaison and interpretation where needed
- Ensure interpretation competencies.

*Thank you very
much!*

Suzanne Tremblay
suzanneltremblay@gmail.com