How and When to Intervene as the Interpreter

Paving the Way 2019
Interventions recommended in the Standards of Practice support good communication with the goal of good health care.
What interventions do interpreters make?

1. Asking for clarification for self or listener A-6, A-8
2. Managing the flow of information A-10
3. Assists provider & patient to negotiate conflicts A-11,13
4. Cultural brokering / Cultural inquiry B-2
5. Share relevant (non-cultural) information C-5 and NCIHC 13
6. Advocacy (to prevent harm) NCIHC 31, 32
What do you consider when deciding whether or not to choose to intervene?

- Is there a problem? How do you know?
- What do you not know? Can you ask?
- Will it be solved without interpreter intervention?
- Will misunderstanding or harm occur?
- Self-Check own motives (more on next slides)
- What is the least invasive, effective, intervention?
- How to word interventions to be most effective?
Self Check: Why do I want to intervene?

Rule out:

- My own situation is similar; the patient reminds me of my own situation or of someone I know well
  A-12 D, C-3 B; C-5 B + D + F + G

- Desire to share personal beliefs
  A-12 C; C-3 A + B + D

- Desire to be a hero, to be the fixer
  “Only I understand my patients; the doctor does not understand” C-5 B + F + G

- Annoyance: Put the medical provider or patient “in their place” C5- G

- Show how much I know, desire for attention A12 B
How to word the Intervention?
Direct vs mitigated speech

Malcolm Gladwell *Outliers*

Mitigated speech

Hard to decode, easy to refuse
(see handout examples)
Interventions and mitigated speech

Speaking as the interpreter, I’d like to mention, if you don’t mind, that I’m not quite certain the patient entirely understands that term. May I have permission to ask if s/he needs clarification?

This is the interpreter speaking: You better explain that term.

- too mitigated
- Not mitigated enough
### Intervention Scripts:

**Asking for clarification for self or listener**

**Longer**

**Speaking as the interpreter, I need to ask you to explain the term “NSR”, because I, the interpreter, do not know what it means.**

**Shorter**

- The interpreter asks, can you explain “NSR”?
- Could you remind the interpreter what “NSR” means?
- This is me, the interpreter, asking: What does “NSR” mean?
intervention scripts

Cultural brokering / mediation / inquiry

It’s possible you may be looking at the situation from this point of view (describe) while the other person may be looking at it from that point of view.

(said to both parties)

The interpreter asks: Would you like to ask the doctor if s/he is familiar with ______ (example: the medicinal tea you use)?
Example scenario: communication has broken down; only the interpreter notices.

Patient complains of belly aches over and over again, provider responds by talking about liver enzymes over and over again.
What do you consider when deciding whether or not to choose to intervene?

- Is there a problem? How do you know? What do you not know?
- Will it be solved without interpreter intervention?
- Will misunderstanding or harm occur?
- Self-Check own motives
- What is the least invasive, effective, intervention?
- How to word interventions to be most effective?
Is there a problem: Analysis

- What is going on?
  - They keep saying the same things over and over again; They are having 2 separate conversations

- Why?
  - Each one is coming from his/her own perspective, and missing the meaning of the other speaker. Neither one feels heard
Will they solve it by themselves?

What happens if you just let it play out?

They’ll keep repeating without progress

Will harm occur?

Medical harm

Harm to Respect

Harm to therapeutic relationship
What do we not know?

- Have they had this conversation before? Is the patient forgetful?
- Is there a connection between liver enzymes and belly pain?
Self Check:

Rule out ‘wrong’ reasons to intervene
What is the least invasive intervention that could solve the problem in this moment?

- Get them on the same wavelength, (talking to each other).

- How do you phrase that?
What is the least invasive intervention …

(when addressing the MD)

“The interpreter asks: Are liver enzymes related to belly pain?”

The interpreter notes the patient keeps talking about belly pain; would it make sense to address that?
What is the least invasive intervention

... (when addressing the patient)

The interpreter asks, would you like to ask the doctor whether (she thinks) liver enzymes have something to do with your belly pain?
Example Scenario: Privacy

Interpreter realized a provider is about to breach the patient’s privacy.

The provider asks an HIV positive patient in front of family member if it is OK to discuss patient’s medical condition. Culturally, the patient could never say no in front of elder family members, even if s/he doesn’t want the information shared.
Is there a problem: Analysis

- What is going on?
  High risk of breach of privacy (HIPAA)

- Why?
  MD is not aware of social implications of saying no
  MD is ignoring previous information
Medical Interpreting Standards Of Practice That Address Privacy p.25, 45

- A-1 Introduce self and explain role
  = includes confidentiality
- A-2 = includes respect for patient’s privacy
- C-4 Respect patients’ privacy. p 45
  = see handout
Will they solve it by themselves?

What happens if you just let it play out?

- Violation of HIPAA
- Patient put in awkward position

Will harm occur?

- Harm to relationships (all of them!)
What do we not know?

• How much English does the family understand?
• Is this relative the one who already knows?
• Does the physician KNOW that this is the relative who knows?
Self Check

Why do I feel I want to intervene?
What is the least invasive intervention that could solve the problem in this moment?

The interpreter needs to ask for clarification outside the room.
Example scenario:

Do you ever hear voices?
Yes, all the time.
(You know it is part of the patient’s normal religious practice.)
What do you consider when deciding whether or not to choose to intervene?

- Is there a problem?
  How do you know? What do you not know?
- Will it be solved without interpreter intervention?
- Will misunderstanding or harm occur?
- Self-Check own motives
- What is the least invasive, effective, intervention?
- How to word interventions to be most effective?
Check your motivation

Is there a problem?
YES
Will it be solved without interpreter intervention?
NO
Will misunderstanding or harm occur?
YES
What is the least invasive, effective intervention?

What is the clearest, shortest way to say something?

DO NOTHING