Where’s the Line and How Do I Draw It?

A Deep Dive into Impartiality and Role Boundaries for Healthcare Interpreters

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Agenda

• Overview of NCIHC standards, professionalism, and interpreter role vis-à-vis the law
• Presentation of impartiality – NCIHC, IMIA, and CHIA
• Discussion of neutrality and emotional barriers
• Role play or “negative” modeling with correction
• Brief meditation/mindfulness exercise
• Presentation of role boundaries – NCIHC, IMIA, and CHIA
• Discussion of realities of patient and cultural expectations
• Practice/role play with saying no
BETRAYAL
CULTURE
POWER
DIALECTS
TECHNIQUE
IMPARTIALITY

OBJECTIVE:
To eliminate the effect of interpreter bias or preference.

Related ethical principle:
Interpreters strive to maintain impartiality and refrain from counseling, advising, or projecting personal biases or beliefs.

9. The interpreter does not allow personal judgments or cultural values to influence objectivity.
   For example, an interpreter does not reveal personal feelings through words, tone of voice, or body language.

10. The interpreter discloses potential conflicts of interest, withdrawing from assignments if necessary.
    For example, an interpreter avoids interpreting for a family member or close friend.
Interpreters are aware of the need to **identify** any potential or actual conflicts of interest, as well as any personal judgments, values, beliefs or opinions that may lead to preferential behavior or bias affecting the quality and accuracy of the interpreting performance.
IMIA impartiality

MANAGE internal conflict

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MAINTAIN impartiality

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL INTERPRETERS ASSOCIATION
Leading the advancement of professional interpreters
Neutrality

• Not taking a position or a side
• Indifference
• Absence of decided views, expression, or strong emotions
What triggers you?

Think of a situation you come across as an interpreter that makes you feel

- anger
- despair
- disgust
- joy
- fear
- sadness
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Work in pairs – discuss one situation and how you might resolve it
Emotional responses

- Flight, fight, or freeze
Mindfulness & meditation

BENEFITS

• decreased emotional reactivity
• increased cognitive flexibility
• improved working memory and focus
• reduced stress
Mindfulness & meditation

FOR OUR PURPOSES

• increase awareness and acceptance of emotions
• create distance from emotions
• differentiate between action, response, and consequence
By increasing **internal** awareness and acceptance of our response to challenging situations, we can better control the **outward** expression of our reaction or emotion, and thus **decrease the impact** of our own selves on the message being communicated.

**WE DON’T HAVE TO BE NEUTRAL, BUT WE MUST REMAIN IMPARTIAL**
PRACTICE

- Sit comfortably
- Eyes closed or lowered
- Refrain from judgment – observe without questioning
- Remain open to what happens
NCIHC Role Boundaries

OBJECTIVE:
To clarify the scope and limits of the interpreting role, in order to avoid conflicts of interest.

Related ethical principle:
The interpreter maintains the boundaries of the professional role, refraining from personal involvement.

16. The interpreter limits personal involvement with all parties during the interpreting assignment.
   For example, an interpreter does not share or elicit overly personal information in conversations with a patient.

17. The interpreter limits his or her professional activity to interpreting within an encounter.
   For example, an interpreter never advises a patient on health care questions, but redirects the patient to ask the provider.

18. The interpreter with an additional role adheres to all interpreting standards of practice while interpreting.
   For example, an interpreter who is also a nurse does not confer with another provider in the patient's presence, without reporting what is said.

National Council on Interpreting in Health Care
Professionalism and Integrity

Interpreters conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the professional standards and ethical principles of the healthcare interpreting profession.
MAINTAIN professional distance

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MAINTAIN professional integrity
It’s autonomy, stupid!
It’s also protection
Brainstorm
How to say no

From *The Community Interpreter: An International Textbook*, chapter by Marjory Bancroft and Katharine Allen

1. Be gracious
2. Offer choices
3. Give reasons
Request for a ride

1. **Be gracious:** I really wish I could give you a ride home – I know that would make you life easier

2. **Offer choices:** Let’s go back inside. I think they still have some bus passes available. Or they may help you call someone who can pick you up.

3. **Give reasons:** I’m not allowed to drive clients in my car. If we got into an accident I could be personally liable for the medical and repair bills. I could also get into trouble at work if I took you home—I might even lose my job.
Practice saying no in pairs

- Write down a sticky request for your partner (like a script), one that would violate any role boundary
- Read this request to your partner, asking him/her to take an action that violates a role boundary
- Your partner will practice saying no according to the three steps
- Switch roles
THANK YOU

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