

Good Practice Guidelines Language and Communication

- Ask your patients about their preferred language and note it in their case notes. If it is not English (or another language in which the healthcare team is fluent), an interpreter must be found. It is not appropriate to use family members such as children to interpret.
- Make full use of translation and interpretation services to help patients make themselves understood.
- Even people with a good grasp of English (or other shared language) may not understand medical terms. Keep your language simple, and explain terms as you go.
- Do not patronize a patient by speaking to them as if they were a child or by speaking loudly or rudely.
- Make sure a patient has actually understood what you have said. Ask them to ask you questions if anything is unclear; alternatively, ask them to repeat a diagnosis.
- Use booklets and other resources that have been professionally translated into the patient's preferred language to help you explain the situation.