

February 2, 2012

Linda R. Hassberg, Esq.
Empire Justice Center
Touro Law Center PAC
225 Eastview Drive, Room 222
Central Islip, NY 11722

Dear Ms. Hassberg:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you a follow-up regarding our efforts concerning meeting the needs of patients with Limited English Proficiency. The following generally corresponds to your e-mail and letter dated January 24, 2012.

1. We have finalized the signage that will be posted throughout the facility advising individuals regarding the availability of free language assistance services. The signage will be in a number of languages including Spanish, Polish, Haitian Creole, Chinese and Russian. These signs will be placed in prominent locations. Signage will be located both on wall locations and on registration and related desks.
2. We have finalized location signage that is in Spanish that will direct individuals to areas throughout the organization. I have attached a copy of what the directional signage will look like. These will be located adjacent to entrances and elevator lobbies. It is my expectation that these will be posted in the next thirty days.
3. On an ongoing basis we are translating important documents in to Spanish. The attached list is in addition to the list provided to you previously. We expect these additional forms to be available in the next month. Please note that we use an external firm to provide form translation services. Jessica R. does not provide this service but coordinates this activity with our purchasing department and reviews the documents to assure their accuracy.
4. I am attaching a copy of the current language services policy which clearly states that it is against hospital policy to use family members and other individuals who are not credentialed to provide translation services. We are reviewing this policy and are in the process of updating it to insure clarity and understanding of the policy. We would appreciate any input you can provide with regard to our policy.
5. We will be using Jessica R. as a resource to determine whether any of our residents and physicians can be credentialed to provide interpretation services. Until this process is completed they will not be permitted to interpret and will be required to use the services of Jessica R. for Spanish and Pacific Interpreters for Spanish and other languages.
6. The business office is in the process of finalizing a specific policy regarding assisting LEP individuals with the Medicaid application process. We are also in the process of providing a specific phone extension in the business office for individuals who want to communicate in Spanish who have questions or issues involving their bill. Every patient will be given a notice concerning this extension as well as the extension for individuals who use English.

7. We will not direct individuals to the North Fork Spanish Apostolate or other organizations for assistance with Medicaid applications. We take our responsibility seriously in this area. I have spoken to Sister Margaret about this and have advised her to contact me immediately if we are not fulfilling our responsibility with regard to financial assistance and other matters involving LEP individuals.
8. We have provided in-service education for emergency department staff and the staff providing education to patients who have been admitted to the Medical Center to assure that we provide them with information in the language they want us to use. This includes both discharge instructions and medications provided at discharge. On an ongoing basis we will be identifying LEP individuals who are treated in the emergency department and elsewhere and will be reviewing the medical records pertaining to the admission of these patients to assure that we have documented and provided the necessary services that address the patient's language needs. We are implementing a methodology that addresses LEP individuals when we do call-backs to ascertain whether they have any needs upon their discharge from the Medical Center.
9. While Jessica R. provides Spanish interpretation services during the hours of 8am – 4pm, Monday through Friday we are using Pacific Interpreters and other professional translations services to provide us with Spanish translation of forms that other documents essential for patient care. We will be trying out the "MARTTI" system which is provided by a firm called Language Access Network which is a method to communicate with LEP individuals using an iPad like screen, which provides both visual and auditory capability with certified interpreters. We expect to try this system in March in both the emergency department and in the maternity areas. This technology also provides us with access to certified sign language interpreters. Based upon the results from this trial we will then make it available at the Medical Center. Language Access Network provides Spanish interpretation services along with the other major languages. For certain languages we will continue to use Pacific Interpreters.

It is our hope that this summary addresses our plan to meet the needs of LEP populations. Please note that I will be out of the office from February 14 and will be returning on February 28, 2012 should you have any questions or need further information. Upon my return I will be providing you with follow-up information as to how we are progressing.

I look forward to working with you and the other representatives we met with to enhance the resources provided to LEP individuals.

I can be contacted at [redacted].

Sincerely,

Vice President for Corporate Affairs

CC: Ligia Soto
Jennifer Torres
Shena Elrington
Sister Margaret Smyth
Juanita Torres

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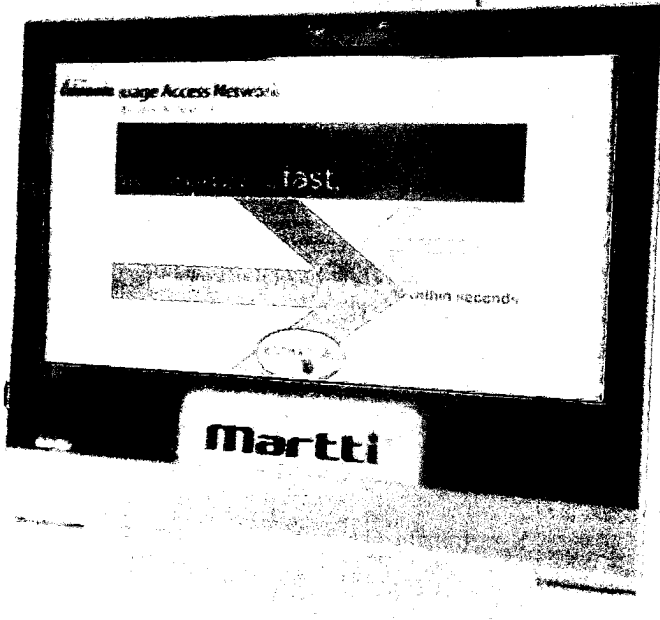
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New device ensures good medical care gets found in translation

Medical providers, patients can now communicate in more than 170 languages

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The Martti video interpreter machine will help non-English speaking residents communicate better with doctors and hospitals. (Photo by Nate Pesce / December 14, 2011)

By David Greisman, dgreisman@tribune.com
December 15, 2011 | 2:28 p.m.

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Martti touchscreen at Howard County General Hospital

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The newest advance at Howard County General Hospital is neither a large and expensive medical device nor an improvement in surgical procedures, but rather a computer screen — and a service — that allows medical providers and patients to communicate with each other in more than 170 languages and dialects.

Simple as it sounds, it is an important improvement.

The system, called Martti, for "My accessible real-time trusted interpreter," links the hospital by video to trained medical interpreters working for the Columbus, Ohio-based Language Access Network. At any time of day, on every day of the year, patients who do not speak English well or at all — or patients who are deaf or hearing impaired — can have better conversations with medical providers.

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"This gives us instant access to a translator," said Victor A. Broccolino, president and CEO of Howard County General Hospital. "There really is nothing like it."

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There are nine Martti devices at Howard County General Hospital, as well as one at Chase Brexton Health Services in Columbia and one at Healthy Howard in Columbia. The system was launched at the hospital on Nov. 29. An event announcing its use was held Thursday at the Hawthorn Center in Columbia.

Horizon Foundation, a Columbia-based nonprofit focused on health and wellness in Howard County, is paying for two-thirds of a two-year trial period of the service, according to Richard M. Krieg, the foundation's president and CEO. The remaining one-third is being paid for by the hospital.

The total cost for two years of Martti and all of the languages and dialects from Language Access Network's interpreters is \$180,000, Krieg said. Last year alone, Howard County General spent more than \$100,000 just on American Sign Language interpreters for its patients, according to Broccolino.

"This has been a great success story at the hospital," Broccolino said Thursday. "This is beyond the standard of care. We're ahead of everyone in the health care system in this regard."

The devices are spread out in a number of the hospital's departments. Since its launch, the hospital has used Martti 78 times for nearly 1,200 minutes, Broccolino said.

The most-needed language so far has been Spanish, followed by Chin, which is a dialect in Myanmar. The other languages interpreted have been Arabic, Creole-French, Parsi, Hakka, Korean, Mandarin and Vietnamese.

"We've known now for well over 10 years that we have a large foreign-born population in Howard County," Krieg said. The 2010 census showed that 15.5 percent of Howard County residents are foreign-born.

"We found that there are many people in many different groups who are here and do not speak sufficient English" for complex health issues, he said.

When the Healthy Howard initiative first began in the county, staff members noted that there were at least 21 languages being spoken here, Liddy Garcia Bunuel, the agency's executive director, said Thursday.

Elisa Montalvo, the Hispanic Achievement Specialist for the county public school system, said that many parents in Howard do not speak any English or their English is not good enough to have an effective conversation with a health care provider.




Some go to other jurisdictions that might offer their own services or bring their own interpreter, sometimes a child. Some just make do without an interpreter, she said.

"A lot of the information gets lost in translation," she said. "A lot of misunderstandings occur."

One such situation is what led to Language Access Network's founding eight years ago, according to Andy Panos, the company's chief operating officer. His brother was in a motor vehicle accident in Mexico and confronted serious miscommunications between himself and those trying to help him.

"This situation goes on throughout the United States," Panos said. This system "empowers both a patient and a provider to communicate, to make sure what you're feeling — your anxieties, your pain — was being communicated properly and effectively.

"It makes an amazing difference," he said, "in a patient's life."

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