Policy on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services

July 1, 2009

The policy formerly designated as “Limited English Proficiency Patients Policy” was changed to reflect national standards on culturally and linguistically appropriate services (CLAS) as outlined by the Office of Minority Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Due to the increase in the Spanish speaking population in its service area, and the corresponding significant increase in Spanish speaking patients, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Dentistry has adopted a language assistance program, including translation and interpretation services, for its Spanish speaking Limited English Proficiency (LEP) patients.

Interpretation and translation services based on this policy is monitored and assessed on a regular basis using, among other things, demographic data to determine whether patients with limited English proficiency who speak languages other than Spanish and who require translation and interpretation services exist in the School of Dentistry's service area.

The Office of Clinical Affairs is responsible for implementing and overseeing this program.

I. WRITTEN DOCUMENTS AND FORMS

1. All documents and forms that are read or written on by patients shall be translated into Spanish.
2. All translated documents and forms used for patient care must be approved by the Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs, who shall consult with a qualified translator.
3. Ad hoc translations of written documents and forms are not permitted.

II. INTERPRETATION OF ORAL LANGUAGE

1. Signs are placed at the Admissions/Urgent Care desks announcing availability of interpretation services and inviting people to identify themselves as needing language assistance.
2. When required, faculty, staff, or students, can obtain an interpreter by contacting the Office of Clinical Affairs. Interpretive services will be provided to non-English-speaking patients and patients requiring sign language at no charge.
3. Students, faculty and staff are required to make note of LEP and/or hearing impaired patients’ language preferences in the EPR.
4. Due to the large volume of Spanish-speaking patients, the School of Dentistry provides a professional interpreter for patients who speak Spanish. The use of friends and family members to interpret is strongly discouraged. Refusal of interpretation services must be documented and signed in the appropriate progress note.
5. Minors (children under the age of 18 years of age) are never permitted to interpret.
6. Interpretation services for patients who speak languages other than Spanish are also coordinated by the Spanish Interpreter. Telephone interpretation services for other languages are available through the UNC Hospitals Interpreter Service and are used by the School of Dentistry as needed.
7. Services for patients requiring sign language interpretation are coordinated by the Director of Patient Relations.
III. STAFFING

1. The ability to speak both Spanish and English shall be considered an important attribute when hiring staff throughout the School of Dentistry.
2. The Office of Clinical Affairs will inform staff and their supervisors via e-mail of the LEP policy and will provide updates.
3. Staff will be trained on how to contact interpreters and how to interact with patients while waiting for interpretive services.
4. Cultural sensitivity training will be arranged by the Office of Clinical Affairs, either to individuals or groups of personnel, if the need is indicated by negative feedback (see section V).

IV. MONITORING

1. The efficiency of the program will be monitored, based on feedback from faculty, staff and students. This feedback will include formal or informal surveys, and complaints.
2. External social services groups will be contacted for additional assistance if necessary.
3. The program will be reassessed at least once annually by the Office of Clinical Affairs and modified as necessary.