HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

During National Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 to October 15) we recognize the contributions made and the important presence of Hispanic and Latino Americans in the United States, and celebrate their heritage and culture.

Hispanics have had a profound and positive influence on our country through their strong commitment to family, faith, hard work, and service. They have enhanced and shaped our national character with centuries-old traditions that reflect the multietnic and multicultural customs of their community.

In September 1968, Congress authorized President Lyndon B. Johnson to proclaim National Hispanic Heritage Week, observed during the week that included Sept. 15 and Sept. 16. The observance was expanded in 1989 by Congress to a month long celebration (Sept. 15 - Oct. 15), America celebrates the culture and traditions of those who trace their roots to Spain, Mexico and the Spanish-speaking nations of Central America, South America and the Caribbean.

Sept. 15 was chosen as the starting point for the celebration because it is the anniversary of independence of five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on Sept. 16 and Sept. 18, respectively.

The term Hispanic or Latino, refers to Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. On the 2010 Census form, people of Spanish, Hispanic and/or Latino origin could identify themselves as Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or “another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.”

According to this Census, 50.5 million people or 16% of the population are of Hispanic or Latino origin. This represents a significant increase from 2000, which registered the Hispanic population at 35.3 million or 13% of the total U.S. population.

Patriot Day

Patriot Day falls on 11th September (also commonly known as Nine-Eleven) and is remembered globally as the anniversary of the catastrophic terrorist attacks on the USA of 11th September 2001.

Embedded in the memories of everyone who lived through it, this was the day four jet planes were hijacked and crashed into the New York World Trade Center and the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, causing the deaths of 2,977 people. The fourth plane (United Airlines Flight 93) was directed at Washington DC, but its passengers bravely attempted to take back control and it crashed into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

The large majority of those lost after the attacks on the Twin Towers were working at or above the points of collision; thousands of people who had gone to work that morning like every other day, found themselves suddenly stranded at the top of a burning skyscraper. A number made the choice to jump from the flaming buildings rather than wait to be caught by the flames or for the building to collapse. No one could forget the terrifying and heartbreaking stories and images captured by the news footage of the day.

In the wake of the World Trade Center collisions, many brave men and women from the emergency services risked their lives to try to help rescue victims of the attacks, and of them 411 lost their own lives attempting to fight fires and rescue people.

Patriot Day is recognized by US law as the official day of remembrance for these tragic events, and has been observed every year since. Each year on this day, American flags are flown at half-staff to honour and commemorate those lives lost. The US President asks fellow Americans to observe a moment of silence at 8.46am (Eastern Daylight Time), the time of the first plane collision into the North Tower of the World Trade Center.

While the events took place within the USA, the shock and grief experienced in response to the attacks was shared across the globe, and for this reason Patriot Day will be observed not only in America, but all over the world.
The Pre-session
The Interpreter’s Magic Tool for Avoiding Frustration
By Cynthia E. Roat

“Patients don’t seem to trust interpreters.”
“Providers don’t seem to trust interpreters.”
“The patient and the doctor always talk to me, not to each other.”
“Nobody pauses to let me interpret.”
“Patients are always telling me things that they don’t want interpreted.”

Sounds familiar? These are some of the most common frustrations that community interpreters run into. And though nothing you do will completely eradicate these problems, you do possess a tool that will minimize them: the pre-session.

What is a pre-session?
A pre-session is a short (sometimes very short) introduction that you do with the patient and provider before beginning the interpretation. The purposes of the pre-session are to introduce yourself, to establish yourself as a professional interpreter, to clarify your role, and to help patient and provider know how best to use your services. Remember, if a patient or provider has not worked previously with a professional interpreter, they won’t know what to expect. You need to tell them.

How do I do a pre-session?
Pre-sessions with patients can usually be done in a fairly relaxed manner, sitting next to the patient, since there is usually ample time. There is often time to do a pre-session with patients before the provider comes in, either while sitting in the waiting room, or while sitting in the exam room after the vital signs have been taken. Here are some things to include in a pre-session with a patient:

1. your name,
2. the organization you represent,
3. that the patient can speak directly to the provider,
4. that you’ll interpret everything that is said exactly as it was said,
5. that it would help you be more accurate if he or she would pause after a full thought to let you interpret,
6. that all information will be kept confidential,
7. that you cannot answer questions or give medical advice.

Pre-sessions with the provider must be done more quickly, as they typically take place right after the provider comes in and introduces him- or herself to the patient. You will want to include many of the same things you told the patient:

1. your name,
2. the organization you represent,
3. that you’ll interpret everything that is said exactly as it was said,
4. that the provider can speak directly to the patient,
5. that it would help you to be more accurate if he or she would pause after a full thought to let you interpret.

If you have worked before with a particular provider, you don’t have to do a pre-session every time. However, if you’ve never done one before, do at least one with every patient and provider with whom you work!

So why don’t interpreters do pre-sessions more often?
It’s a mystery to me! As I train interpreters around the country, I find that many are reluctant to do pre-sessions. They tell me they are afraid it will take too much time, that the provider will be impatient, that it seems too formal with the patient. Yet when I train providers to work with interpreters and show them what a professional pre-session looks like, they say: “Wow, that’s great! It really clarifies how things should work. I wish my interpreters would do that. So, avoid the frustration of patients and providers who don’t know how to work with you.

Do everyone a favor, and do a pre-session!