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### INSIDE HEALTH CARE

## Illinois hospitals enlisting video translators

### Under live system hospitals with patient diversity do not have to communicate via children or expensive in-person translators

By Bruce Japsen

Tribune reporter

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Worried about the potential for medical errors as the number of non-English speakers grows, Illinois hospitals are rolling out a live video system that can translate from medical-care providers to patients in 150 languages.

The **Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council**, a trade group and lobby for area hospitals, and California-based **Paras and Associates** have launched the effort in three hospitals in Chicago and a fourth in Salem; 25 other facilities are considering adopting the technology.



Translators, versed in medical jargon and health-care terminology, are available by video or telephone 24 hours a day and can be seen on the system's portable screen that sits atop a mobile cart. The system, known as the **Illinois Video Interpreter Network**, was on display at this week's **Health Information Management Systems Society** annual meeting at McCormick Place in Chicago.

"It's clearly a cost-saving technology for hospitals because it helps reduce the whole issue of medical errors," said **Michael King**, director of development for the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council. "Individual patients who may not have someone available to speak English will not have to resort to the 8-year-old son who speaks Cantonese and may not know anything about the condition of his father or mother."

The first to join the network are **Sinai Health System** in Chicago, which includes **Mt. Sinai**

**Hospital** and **Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital; University of Illinois Medical Center at Chicago**; and **Salem Township Hospital**, east of St. Louis.

Hospitals say the system is cheaper and more efficient than the traditional method of helping patients who can't speak English. It costs 80 cents per minute to use the Illinois Video Interpreter Network, compared with several times that to hire interpreters who often require a two- or three-hour minimum of service, King said.

Hospitals hope the system helps reduce the potential for medical errors. Language barriers have been blamed for giving patients the wrong medication or diagnoses.

*Hear Bruce Japsen on WGN-AM 720 at 12:49 p.m. and 11:15 p.m. Mondays and 7:35 a.m. Sundays.*

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