

Getting their wires crossed? Interpreters and clinicians' expectations of the role of professional interpreters in the Australian health context

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ABSTRACT

The positive impact the provision of professional language services has in the health context is well documented: the greater the engagement of qualified interpreters and culturally competent health professionals, the better the health outcomes of patients with limited English proficiency. However, while most professional interpreters in Australia generally adhere to the *Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (2012a) Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct*, a significant number appear to ignore or reject important precepts of the Code in their practice, especially if these interpreters are casual (non-in-house) agency interpreters. Similarly, while most health professionals display an understanding of the role professional interpreters have in the health context, a number of them fail to grasp the importance of key elements of the Code of Ethics, including appropriate briefing, what should be interpreted and how, and the appropriate role boundaries of the interpreter. These findings are based on the analysis of two interpreter and two clinician surveys, both conducted in Australia.

KEYWORDS: code of ethics; culturally competent clinical care; language services; professional healthcare interpreters/ing; role of the interpreter