

# Don't Let Rx's for Non-English-Speaking Patients Get Lost in Translation

You play an important role in **helping patients who speak a foreign language.**

Many of these patients may not speak English well...making communication challenging.

And prescription labels that are translated into their native language are often incorrect or incomplete.

Don't let these patients get lost in translation.

**Communication.** Be familiar with routine medical words in other languages.

For example, "gota" is Spanish for "drop"..."goli" is Punjabi for "pill"...and "allergia" is Italian for "allergy."

Follow your pharmacy's policy for accessing an interpreter. For example, you may be able to call a hotline for translation services.

Suggest getting pictogram "flash cards" for your pharmacy...to help your pharmacist explain counselling points, such as taking a medication at night, with food, or on an empty stomach.

**Patient profiles.** Double-check that patient names are entered correctly. For example, a last name that sounds like "Lee" could be spelled Lee, Li, Le, Lie, Ly, or Lei.

Use additional patient identifiers, such as date of birth, to make sure you select the right patient.

Include the patient's primary language in their profile. Most computer systems can print labels and drug info in another language.

**Rx labels.** Make sure ALL directions have been properly translated...some words could spell trouble if they're misinterpreted.

For instance, "once" means "eleven" in Spanish...and could lead to a patient taking 11 doses of a med instead of just once daily.

Share our Spanish or French patient education handouts if applicable...to help increase understanding.

And get our CE, *Embracing Cultural Competence*, to personalize care for patients of different backgrounds.

## Key References:

-Res Social Adm Pharm 2017;13(1):123-32

-Am J Pharm Educ 2006;70(2):43

-Pediatrics 2010;125(5):960-5

Pharmacy Technician's Letter Canada. July 2019, No. 350729

Cite this document as follows: Article, Don't Let Rx's for Non-English-Speaking Patients Get Lost in Translation, Pharmacy Technician's Letter Canada, July 2019

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