

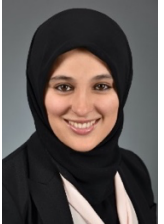


**The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Language Equity Symposium**  
**August 24, 2023**

In the United States, 26 million people have limited English proficiency (“LEP”), a number expected to increase to 67 million by 2050.<sup>1</sup> In Massachusetts, just under 10% of adults speak English “less than very well.”<sup>2,3</sup> While federal law requires any healthcare institution receiving federal funds to provide appropriate language access for all patients, research shows that disparities still exist in access, outcomes, and satisfaction in medical care among different linguistic groups.<sup>4,5,6</sup> In an effort to work towards language and health equity, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Language Equity Symposium (“LES”) brought together researchers, clinicians, policymakers, interpreters, and hospital administrators at the Center for Surgery and Public Health at Brigham and Women’s Hospital to discuss best practices and advancements in language equity. The LES was held in collaboration with Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Tufts Medical Center on August 24, 2023, and hosted over 175 participants in person and virtually, including locally and nationally recognized experts.

The goals of the symposium were to connect experts in language equity and offer attendees the opportunity to learn about cutting-edge research, projects, and policies. The symposium was four hours long, beginning with quick shot presentations, followed by an expert panel and open discussion.

<b>Quick-Shot Presenters</b>		<b>MyDzung Chu, PhD, MSPH</b> Tufts Medical Center <i>“ADAPT Coalition: Addressing Disparities in Asian Populations through Translational Research”</i>		<b>Rose Molina, MD, MPH</b> Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center <i>“Enhancing Communication and Trust during Pregnancy Care: A Focus on Spanish-Speaking Patients and Language Barriers”</i>
		<b>Kathryn Huber, MD, PhD</b> Tufts Medical Center <i>“Language Barriers to the Delivery of Accurate Radiation Therapy”</i>		<b>Ana Sofia Ore, MD, MSc, MPH</b> Brigham and Women’s Hospital <i>“Impact of Cultural Competency in Outpatient Surgical Care: Implementation of a Sustainable Latinx Colorectal Surgery Clinic”</i>
		<b>Alisa Khan, MD, MPH</b> Boston Children’s Hospital <i>“Language Equity and Hospital Safety”</i>		<b>Gezzer Ortega, MD, MPH</b> Brigham and Women’s Hospital <i>“Equitable Use of Interpreter Services and Resources for Patients and Healthcare Professionals (EQUIP)”</i>
		<b>Miguel Linares, MD, MPH</b> Brigham and Women’s Hospital <i>“Patient Perspectives on Language-Concordant Phone Services in Primary and Specialty Care”</i>		<b>Jorge A. Rodriguez, MD</b> Brigham and Women’s Hospital <i>“Clinician and Interpreter Perspectives on the Diagnostic Process in Telemedicine Care for Patients with Limited English Proficiency Presenting with Abdominal Pain”</i>

Quick-shot presentations from early career investigators shared recent work to promote language equity, as well as current and future projects. Dr. Khan from Boston Children’s Hospital shared with us the disparities in outcomes as related to language for pediatric populations with implications for patient safety: Children who are hospitalized and whose parents lack comfort with English were more likely to have adverse events compared to children whose parents are comfortable with English.<sup>7</sup> Her work has also identified that individuals with English proficiency are more likely to speak up and ask providers questions compared to those with limited-English proficiency.<sup>8</sup> Drs. Linares, Ore, and Molina separately shared their work on language and cultural responsiveness in the clinical setting. In the outpatient setting, Dr. Linares, from Brigham and Women’s Hospital, hopes to understand how patients with non-English primary language navigate the healthcare system, identifying any facilitators or barriers to care. Dr. Ore, from Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, also aims to improve outpatient care through a specialized clinic for Latinx patients seen for colorectal surgery. Through an integrated approach, the clinic focuses on health literacy, LEP, and cultural humility to achieve equitable care for the Boston Latinx community. Dr. Molina from Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center shared her work on enhancing communication and trust during pregnancy for Spanish-speaking patients who have language barriers. She highlighted how language barriers can lead to communication and trust challenges despite using qualified interpreters, but positive interpersonal dynamics can overcome language barriers.<sup>9</sup>

Quick-shot presentations also discussed the role of technology in language access and implications for improving access to interpreter services, diagnosis, and delivery of care. At Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Dr. Ortega is studying how greater access to an immediate interpreter application influences language-concordant care in surgical settings. Dr. Rodriguez, also from Brigham and Women’s Hospital, presented his work on clinician and interpreter perspectives on the diagnostic process in telemedicine care for patients with limited English proficiency, emphasizing an additional layer of challenges with communication in a virtual platform. Dr. Huber from Tufts Medical Center shared how language barriers influence the delivery of accurate radiation therapy within her own practice.<sup>10</sup> Taking steps to address issues faced by her patient population, Dr. Huber is creating and implementing language-free visual guidance for deep inspiration breath hold to ensure that patients are receiving the standard of care and the appropriate amount of radiation to the heart and lungs during radiation treatment for breast cancer.

Bringing attention to the importance of community partnerships, Dr. Chu from Tufts Medical Center shared the mission and ongoing efforts of the ADAPT (Addressing Disparities in Asian Populations through Translational Research) coalition, emphasizing how an interdisciplinary team is addressing health disparities in Asian populations through engagement of both community and academic partners in translational research. Together, quick-shot presenters underscored the importance of interdisciplinary partnerships, community engagement and collaboration, and multipronged, evidenced-based interventions to improve access, delivery of care, and health outcomes for patients with limited English proficiency.

The morning session concluded with a lively and thoughtful panel that brought together experts in policy, healthcare administration, community engagement, and interpretation to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing language equity work in healthcare, and the future of language access. Some of the topics discussed include:







- ***The biggest issues facing language access in the next 5 years:*** Panelists agreed that more work is needed to better understand our patients’ language access needs so that we can best advocate for necessary services and care. From a systems-level lens, Juan Fernando Lopera, Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer for Beth Israel Lahey Health, shared that healthcare systems need to advocate for language needs assessments, and collect more data on language and health outcomes to best advocate for system-wide improvements in language access services. In a similar vein, Bill Tan, MEd, founder of Transcendent Endeavors, Canopy Innovations, Inc., and Blossom, suggested that hospitals should analyze interpreter services data, not just as volume usage, but also the impact and health outcomes that result from language concordant encounters. Sucharita Kher, MD, Vice Chair for Clinical Operations and Quality in the Department of Medicine at Tufts University School of Medicine, and Crystal Rosa,



Language Access Manager for the City of Cambridge, both emphasized that with language access is the rising need for resources to address health literacy and digital health literacy. This underscores the importance of understanding the demographics and social determinants of health of our patients to best provide comprehensive, and linguistically and culturally appropriate care.

- **The need for multimodal language services:** Language access spans a spectrum, as some individuals may require more language support than others, and currently we do not have adequate means to fully understand the needs of our patient population. Increasing accessibility to interpreters is vital, but there is also a need for increased access to translated documents. As Divya Chaturvedi, MPA, Executive Director of Found in Translation, said, “language should be central to all we do.” An audience member advocated for involvement of patient community advisory boards as a method of reviewing translated documents and ensuring their linguistic and cultural appropriateness for patients. Iris Coloma-Gaines, Esq, a Statewide Language Access Attorney from the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, discussed the Massachusetts Language Access and Inclusion Act (S.2040/H.3199) and its role in improving access to state agency services for MA residents with LEP or who don’t speak English. The Act would have a broad impact, requiring public facing state agencies to offer interpretation and translation of vital documents, such as online applications, websites, appeal forms, among others.
- **Involvement of community partners:** Community engagement is essential to improve the overall health of all patients. It is important to leverage relationships between community members and healthcare organizations to ensure that community voices are represented in all the work that we do as researchers, clinicians, policymakers, interpreters, and hospital administrators. Divya Chaturvedi urged partnership between community organizations, local governments, and individuals to promote education of and access to language resources.

Quick-shot presenters and panelists alike echoed that great work towards understanding language access needs and health equity is occurring throughout the region, though this work often occurs in silos. There was a call to action for collaboration between partners to broaden the reach and strengthen our efforts.

<b>Panelists</b>		Divya Chaturvedi, MPA, M.Phil, MA, Executive Director, Found in Translation		Sucharita Kher, MD, Vice Chair for Clinical Operations and Quality, Department of Medicine, Tufts University School of Medicine
		Iris Coloma-Gaines, Esq., Statewide Language Access Attorney, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute		Crystal Rosa, Language Access Manager, City of Cambridge
		Juan Fernando Lopera, Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer, Beth Israel Lahey Health		Bill Tan, MEd, Founder, Transcendent Endeavors, Canopy Innovations, Inc., and Blossom



In an effort to continue the conversation and expand the reach of the symposium's work, members of the organizing committee and interested attendees are drafting perspective pieces on relevant topics. These perspectives will be published in relevant journals and media to expand the conversation and promote the importance of language equity in healthcare. In coming years, we hope to expand the LES to include more community member voices and certified interpreters. We are grateful for the success and growth of this year's LES, which could not have been possible without the support of the Center for Surgery and Public Health at Brigham and Women's Hospital and the LES organizing committee.

2023 Language Equity Symposium Organizing Committee:

Gezzer Ortega, MD, MPH

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## Resources

Below is a compiled list of resources that were shared by Language Equity Symposium presenters and/or attendees. Please note that resources listed below have not been reviewed and are not endorsed by LES organizers.

### Tech Solutions

- Jeenie: [Jeenie Interpreters](#)
- Canopy Innovations: [Canopy](#)
- TranslateLive: [TranslateLive](#)

### Government Sponsored Resources

- Limited English Proficiency, LEP.gov
  - <https://www.lep.gov/>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health
  - [Cultural and Linguistic Competency | Office of Minority Health.](#)
- Massachusetts' Department of Public Health and Office of Health Equity Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Initiative, hands on tools for collecting and sharing diversity data
  - [Making CLAS Happen: Six Areas for Action | Mass.gov](#)
  - [Collect Diversity Data | Mass.gov](#)
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
  - Toolkit for Engaging Patients to Improve Diagnostic Safety
    - [Toolkit for Engaging Patients To Improve Diagnostic Safety | Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#)
  - AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit
    - [AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit](#)
- National Council on Interpreting in Health Care
  - "National Standards of Practice for Interpreters in Healthcare," published September 2005
    - [Ethics and Standards of Practice](#)
    - [NCIHC National Standards of Practice for Interpreters in Health Care](#)
  - "National Code of Ethics for Interpreters in Health Care," published July 2004
    - [A NATIONAL CODE OF ETHICS FOR INTERPRETERS IN HEALTH CARE](#)
  - "Interpreter Advocacy in Healthcare Encounters: A Closer Look," published March 2021
    - [Interpreter Advocacy in Healthcare Encounters: A Closer Look](#)
  - National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC) Free Webinar from May 2, 2023, "Language and Health Literacy: How to Speak and Write for a Diverse Patient Population."
    - [OTR04 Free Webinar-NCIHC On The Road-Language and Health Literacy](#)
  - NCIHC Congress 2023, "Going back to the future", September 28-29, 2023
    - [NCIHC Congress 2023](#)

### Interpreting Resources

- Massachusetts Medical Interpreter Training at UMass Chan Medical School
  - [Massachusetts Medical Interpreter Training |](#)
- Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters
  - [Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters](#)
- The National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters
  - [National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters](#)



## Podcasts

- Health Communication Partners, podcast by Anne Marie Liebel from June 9, 2023, “Looking at communication with equity lenses.”
  - [Looking at communication with equity lenses](#)

## Other Organizations

- Health Equity Compact
  - [Health Equity Compact](#)
- The Institute for Healthcare Advancement, Health Literacy Solutions Center
  - [Health Literacy Solutions Center](#)
- Speechify
  - [https://speechify.com/?via=Text-to-speech&source=fb-for-mobile&gclid=CjwKCAjwkY2qBhBDEiwAoQXK5et8kw4mmKLzlOKdtTPMuqtYcOKWotI\\_HdA3jF77\\_KVJZA4R6ISbeRoCJRkQAvD\\_BwE](https://speechify.com/?via=Text-to-speech&source=fb-for-mobile&gclid=CjwKCAjwkY2qBhBDEiwAoQXK5et8kw4mmKLzlOKdtTPMuqtYcOKWotI_HdA3jF77_KVJZA4R6ISbeRoCJRkQAvD_BwE)

