

Medical Leadership Council on Language Access: Press Release
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**Physician and Health Care Leaders Report Successes
In Improving Language Access and Cultural Competence**

Los Angeles, CA – DATE – Some 32 key physician, advocacy, and health care organizations are reporting success in recent projects to improve their services to patients who speak primary languages other than English. Meeting together as the Medical Leadership Council on Cultural Proficiency, the group shared its findings so that other institutions can replicate these projects.

Scripps Mercy Hospital in San Diego/Chula Vista, for example, has achieved a 40% decrease in readmissions over the six months after discharge for patients with cardiovascular disease by reconciling pre- and post-admissions medication lists and providing this list and directions to patients in English and Spanish. Catholic Healthcare West and St. Joseph Health System are tracking patient languages system-wide and making interpreters readily available. Kaiser Permanente is studying large groups of Cantonese- and Spanish-speaking patients to compare outcomes for those provided with integrated language-access services to those who are not.

“Together we are changing how health care is delivered in California,” said Robert K. Ross, MD, President and CEO of The California Endowment, sponsor of Council meetings and projects. “By increasing patients’ access to interpreters and improving the cultural competency of hospitals, health systems, and individual physician offices, we are taking the first steps toward eliminating the two-tiered American health care system in which people who speak languages other than English and people of color are at greater risk for inferior health outcomes.”

In the landmark study released in March 2002, “Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care,” the prestigious Institute of Medicine documented that patients suffer worse health outcomes depending on their race and ethnicity, regardless of their ability to pay for services. The world of medicine subsequently launched multiple efforts to eliminate these health care disparities. The California Endowment and its grantees are at the forefront of this work.

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