

**Call for Papers: Guest-edited Issue on Non-Professional Interpreting in Healthcare**

Guest-edited issue of the new *Journal of Non-Professional Interpreting and Translation (JoNPIT)* by Marta Arumí and Mireia Vargas-Urpí

Effective communication between healthcare providers and patients is fundamental to delivering quality care. Language barriers can significantly hinder this communication, leading to adverse health outcomes. While professional interpreters should be the ideal solution for bridging language gaps, the reality shows that non-professional interpreters—such as family members, friends, children and youth or untrained bilingual staff—are the most extended solution adopted in medical settings.​

Previous research has highlighted both the prevalence and the complexities of non-professional interpreting in healthcare. Since Kaufert and Koolage’s (1984) seminal contribution on conflict roles among native Canadian medical interpreters, who were described as unaccredited as professionals and lacking systematic training, research on healthcare interpreting has always been permeated by the undeniable presence of non-professional interpreters. Up to now, a wide range of topics have been explored. Among others, it is a practice that raises concerns about accuracy and potential risks, as non-professional interpreters may lack the necessary skills to convey medical information effectively. For instance, errors in medical interpretation by untrained individuals have been documented, potentially compromising patient safety (Flores *et al*, 2012; Nápoles et al. 2015, Schenker et al. 2012).

Moreover, the use of non-professional interpreters introduces ethical dilemmas, particularly regarding confidentiality and the potential for conflicts of interest. Family members, for example, might filter information based on their judgments, intentionally or unintentionally, affecting the patient’s autonomy and informed consent (Chang, Hutchinson and Gullick, 2021; Gargan and Chianese, 2007; Rosenberg, Leanza and Seller; 2007).

Despite these challenges, non-professional interpreters often serve as the default solution in situations where professional services are unavailable or underutilized. Understanding the implications of this practice is crucial for developing strategies to improve healthcare delivery for linguistically diverse populations. This guest-edited issue aims to explore the complexities, challenges, and outcomes associated with non-professional interpreting in healthcare environments.

**Topics of interest:**

* **Accuracy and impact on healthcare outcomes:** Investigations into the frequency and types of interpretation errors made by non-professional interpreters and research on how the use of non-professional interpreters influences clinical outcomes.
* **Ethical considerations:** Analysis of confidentiality breaches, role boundaries, and the ethical implications of using non-professional interpreters, referencing established codes of ethics.
* **Patient (mis)understanding, satisfaction and trust:** Studies assessing how non-professional interpreting affects patient understanding of medical information, adherence to treatment plans, overall satisfaction with care and trust towards doctors or the medical system as a whole.
* **Cultural competence:** Studies on how non-professional interpreters navigate cultural nuances and the effect on patient-provider communication.
* **Policy and guidelines:** Discussions on existing policies regarding non-professional interpreting and recommendations for best practices to ensure quality care.

We invite researchers to submit original research articles that shed light on the multifaceted role of non-professional interpreters in healthcare. Submissions should provide empirical evidence, theoretical insights, interdisciplinary and mixed-methods approaches and case studies to enhance understanding and inform future practices and further research in this area.

**Submission guidelines:**

* Manuscripts should be prepared according to the journal's standard author guidelines ([Submissions | Journal of Non-professional Interpreting and Translation](https://jonpit.unibo.it/about/submissions)).
* All submissions will undergo a rigorous peer-review process.
* Manuscripts should be sent to Marta.Arumi@uab.cat and Mireia.Vargas@uab.cat by 15 September 2025.
* Estimated publication date: April 2026

For inquiries regarding this guest-edited issue, please contact: Marta Arumí (marta.arumi@uab.cat) and Mireia Vargas-Urpí (mireia.vargas@uab.cat), guest editor’s of this issue.

**References:**

Chang, H., Hutchinson, C., & Gullick, J. (2021). Pulled away: the experience of bilingual nurses as *ad hoc* interpreters in the emergency department. *Ethnicity & health*, *26*(7), 1045–1064. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13557858.2019.1613518>

Flores, G., Abreu, M., Barone, C. P., Bachur, R., & Lin, H. (2012). Errors of medical interpretation and their potential clinical consequences: a comparison of professional versus ad hoc versus no interpreters. *Annals of emergency medicine*, *60*(5), 545–553. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annemergmed.2012.01.025>

Gargan, N., & Chianese, J. (2007). A review of the literature surrounding the provision of interpreters in health care, focusing on their role in translating information for non-English-speaking cancer patients and issues relating to informed consent. *Journal of Radiotherapy in Practice*, *6*(4), 201–209. doi:10.1017/S1460396907006152

Kaufert, J. M., & Koolage, W. W. (1984). Role conflict among 'culture brokers': the experience of native Canadian medical interpreters. *Social science & medicine (1982)*, *18*(3), 283–286. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(84)90092-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536%2884%2990092-3)

Nápoles, A. M., Santoyo-Olsson, J., Karliner, L. S., Gregorich, S. E., & Pérez-Stable, E. J. (2015). Inaccurate Language Interpretation and Its Clinical Significance in the Medical Encounters of Spanish-speaking Latinos. *Medical care*, 53(11), 940–947. <https://doi.org/10.1097/MLR.0000000000000422>

Rosenberg, E.; Leanza, Y., & Seller, R. (2007). Doctor–patient communication in primary care with an interpreter: Physician perceptions of professional and family interpreters. *Patient Education and Counseling,* 67(3), 286-292. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pec.2007.03.011>

Schenker, Y., Smith, A. K., Arnold, R. M., & Fernandez, A. (2012). "Her husband doesn't speak much English": conducting a family meeting with an interpreter. *Journal of palliative medicine*, 15(4), 494–498. <https://doi.org/10.1089/jpm.2011.0169>