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Policy and Procedure:

Interpreter Services & Culturally Appropriate Care

Policy

Our practice provides health services to a diverse and multicultural population, including people with disability and those from non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB).

We recommend NESB patients use a professional interpreter service to assist them during consultations. They may wish to enlist a translator who is a family member or friend, however we discourage children from translating on their parent's behalf. And in some cases, having a family member or friend translate is also not appropriate, for the following important reasons:

- Sometimes the patient is reluctant to disclose information to someone they know
- A relative or friend may inadvertently or deliberately relay biased translation of information.

We advise patients to use the [Translating and Interpreting Service \(TIS\)](#) – [Doctors Priority Line](#) (1300 575 847). This is a free service, available 24 hours a day by phone at the time of consultation or with 48 hours' notice, onsite at the practice.

As well as impartiality and greater accuracy, we prefer professional interpreter services over family or friends translating for a patient because they:

- Enhance our provision of quality patient care
- Offer confidentiality
- Understand the importance of risk management
- Provide efficient, effective communication of information in sometimes time-critical situations
- Adhere to professional conduct at all times, not being emotionally involved with patients.

Visit [the TIS website](#) for further information about the their services.

Hearing Impaired Patients

A free interpreting service is available for patients who are deaf and use Australian Sign Language (AUSLAN). Contact the National AUSLAN Interpreter Booking and Payment Service (NABS) on 1800 246 945 or [the NABS website](#) for further information.

Culturally Appropriate Care

Our practitioners find it valuable to have information about a patient's cultural background. We use the following guidelines for developing our practice's approach.

- Not all patients wish to identify their cultural background. This needs to be respected, and the practice needs a system for noting this in the patient's file.
- Patients may be willing to have a discussion relating to their cultural background with some team members, but not others. For example, with the nurse, but not the receptionist.

Encourage all team members to complete this information.

- Have a range of standard phrases to assist staff to encourage patients to self-identify. For example:
 - *Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?*
 - *Would you mind completing this section? (Point to the question on the form)*
 - *We are updating all patient records in relation to cultural identity.*

The following information from SEAGP may be useful:

Sample Patient Questions

Sometimes having prepared answers to questions that patients may raise can make it easier for practice team members to respond confidently. Below are samples of patient questions and answers.

- **Who needs to know?**
Our practice is currently updating all the records we hold. One of the questions generally overlooked, is a person's cultural background. The information collected is used to review services and have a better understanding of the demographics of our practice.
- **Who is this information going to be given to?**
Only healthcare providers who are treating you have authorised access to your personal information at this practice.
- **Do I look Aboriginal?**
Deciding if a person is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander on looks alone is unreliable. I do not mean to offend you by asking. This information is collected from all patients.
- **Does answering this change the way I will be treated?**
No, it won't change the way you are treated. Complete and accurate records will ensure timely access to your clinical information and improve the quality of your care.
- **It's none of your business**
You are not, of course obliged to answer the question so I will complete this part of your record as 'No'. I do not mean to offend you by asking. This information is collected from all patients.
- **Why should they (Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people) get special treatment? I'm just as Australian as they are.**
I can appreciate your concerns. Asking this information does not change the way service providers treat a person. It simply allows health planners to find out why the health of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people is not as good as the health of the general population.

Procedure

Our practice recommends translating and interpreting services to patients in the following ways:

- GPs and clinical staff – providing TIS contact details during a consultation
- Reception staff – when booking appointments

All doctors in this practice are registered with the TIS. Details of each doctor's TIS registration number are located at [insert location].

OPTIONAL

Our practice also provides patient support materials in a variety of languages. The practice manager is responsible for ensuring we have the most current materials.

Translated health information is available from:

- Victorian Government Health Information, [Health Translations Directory](#)
- NSW Health, [Multicultural Health Communication Service](#)
- Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, [10 Tips for Safer Health Care](#).

The following is our practice's protocol when assisting NESB patients:

The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) provides access to phone and onsite interpreting services in over 160 languages and dialects. Further information is available at www.tisnational.gov.au

Culturally Appropriate Care

In our practice, we encourage patients to self-identify their cultural background (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-identification) when they register with the practice.

Helpful resources

GP resources

The RACGP has a number of educational resources and standards to support the cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

- [Standards for general practice training](#) – describes the expected outcomes of a quality and safe training program, including principles for training in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health
- [Curriculum on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health](#) – designed to support training providers in training a culturally aware and responsive GP workforce
- [Cultural awareness education and safety training](#) – provides guidance on the accreditation of cultural awareness and safety Quality Improvement and Continuing Professional Development (QI&CPD) activities
- [Standards for general practices](#) (5th edition), ‘Criterion C2.1 – Respectful and culturally appropriate care’ – includes explanations that are meaningful for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services by taking into account their context, culture and service delivery models
- [Five steps towards excellent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healthcare](#) – practical advice on working towards the delivery of high quality Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healthcare.