



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

(For official use only) PUBLIC PETITION NO.	<b>PE1288</b>
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<b>1. Name of petitioner</b>
Dr. Godfrey Joseph, on behalf of <a href="#">Multi Ethnic Aberdeen Limited (MeAL)</a>
<b>2. Petition title</b>
Improving NHS translation and interpretation services
<b>3. Petition text</b>
Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that every NHS board has the structure, funding and capability to provide speedy, accurate and appropriate translation and interpretation services for patients and their families and that such services are consistent across every NHS board.
<b>4. Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition</b>
<p>The issue was brought to my attention by some of the volunteers from MeAL (Multi Ethnic Aberdeen Ltd) and from ethnic minority groups. They complained that they had no support for interpretation services from the hospital and consequently suffered bad experience. The volunteers also had heard of cases in hospital where people from ethnic minority groups had suffered severely due to interpretation and translation services not being available in hospital.</p> <p>One of our pregnant volunteers, who is Romanian, was taken in to hospital with labour and she could not communicate with the doctors and nurses and vice versa. This led to a horrendous, worrying and stressful time for the patient due to interpretation/ translation services not being available. This led me to think that this issue needed to be addressed to prevent unnecessary worry and stress for patients who cannot communicate in English and thereby preventing fatalities.</p>
<b>5. Petition background information</b>
<b>What action do you wish taken and why?</b> I would like policies in the NHS to change so that the lives of patients from ethnic minorities can be made easier and safer. Translation/interpretation services can be made more accessible by using modern technology such as video links and the internet between translators/interpreters and patients. The video links do not have to be restricted to interpreters in the UK but a database could be set up for interpreters from the countries that the patients originate from.
This would assure the patient that assistance with translation/interpretation

would be more easily available and could alleviate the anxiety and stress additional to the ailment that the patient might be suffering. This would be a faster and a more efficient method of communicating. Our findings have indicated that in some cases patients could be waiting up to 48hrs before an interpreter is available and this is the case if they are languages commonly requested. If the patient spoke a more obscure language interpretation may not be possible at all. To circumvent these problems high tech video links and the internet could be employed which would enable a faster translation/interpretation service and thereby decrease patient anxiety, stress and prevent unnecessary fatalities in these life and death situations.

Comparing Grampian NHS, Borders NHS and NHS greater Glasgow and Clyde showed that they could obtain face to face interpreters and translators for common languages but there was no provision for less common languages e.g. Romanian. This is where technology like video links and the internet could play a major role.

Also within the 3 regions of the NHS, Grampian NHS and Borders NHS had language lines but NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde had no language line, which highlights inequalities between regions.

**When?**

As soon as possible as I already know of an incident where a patient in Grampian has suffered very badly as interpreting services were unavailable and the consequences could have been fatal.

**What questions would you like the Public Petitions Committee to ask and of whom?**

Health Boards

48 hours is a long time to get interpreters/translators. What measures does it have in place in emergency situations?

What provision do you have for patients who do not speak the languages that your board caters for?

This is an unmet need. How do you address it?

What about interim periods?

Could a survey be conducted on patients to monitor the language services currently provided?

Scottish Government

How does it look at this issue and address this problem through policies?

How can this unmet need be promptly addressed?

Equality and Human rights Commission

How can the EHRC get involved in this issue to provide equalities in the health services in the future?

This is an unmet need. How can you address it?

**6. Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website as an e-petition?**

**YES**

**7. Closing date for e-petition**

16 October 2009

**8. Comments to stimulate on-line discussion**

I think health boards should provide better translation/interpretation services to alleviate stress and anxiety of patients who cannot communicate in English and to prevent fatalities due to misunderstanding.