

Test Development for National Medical Interpreter Certification Advances, Oral Exam Pilot Concludes and Written Exam Pilot Commences

Washington DC – (September 29, 2009) – The National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters continues to advance towards the launch of a single national certification process that will award individuals the credential of “Certified Medical Interpreter” (CMI) in a specific language. It recently concluded the pilot of the National Board oral exam and commenced the pilot of the National Board written exam with an open call to the field for participants.

“The National Board is taking every measure to ensure that the written and oral exams accurately assess an interpreter’s knowledge and skills,” said Louis Provenzano, President and COO of Language Line Services. “This pilot phase is critical for ensuring the reliability and validity of the test instruments with complete inclusion of input and participation from the field itself.”

The National Board oral exam pilot, designed to verify the ability of interpreters to apply their knowledge and skills in real-life medical interpreting scenarios, was completed by Language Line® University at the end of August with a total of 300 testing participants who applied following an “open call” from across the United States. In keeping with the Board’s pledge to develop a national certification “by interpreters, for interpreters”, the pilot followed a national job analysis survey earlier this year in which over 1,500 interpreters participated, as well as focus groups, subject matter expert reviews, and ongoing input from the field itself.

“The test assesses the skills and vocabulary of medical interpreting and covers the different areas that an interpreter encounters on a daily basis,” said Patricia Chávez-Dietz, a Spanish interpreter, cross-cultural communicator and member of Medical Interpreter Network of Georgia. “As such, it is a good test that only an individual trained as an interpreter, not just someone who is bilingual, would perform well on.”

Robert Roos, with the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Nebraska Kearney, stated that “while the need for testing of medical interpreters has been evident for a long time, the task of doing it correctly was monumental. The oral exam reflects the hard work, the depth of consideration and input, and the professionalism that went into its development.”

“Although it was difficult for my students who took it, it helped them to realize the areas in which they need to improve to meet the standard for professional medical interpreting,” added Roos. “It is at a level that is both realistic and necessary to assess medical interpreters anywhere, in any setting. And it is has motivated them to study and prepare themselves to pass the actual exam when it becomes available.”

The pilot data from the oral exam has been submitted to PSI Services, LLC, an industry-leading provider of professional testing services, for test validity and reliability analysis. The results report from PSI will be used to make final adjustments to the assessment tool’s design. Once complete, the oral exam will be adapted into other languages in preparation for its national implementation.

“The pilot testing phase has been a very collaborative process, as we’ve benefited from the participation and support of many healthcare organizations, medical interpreting service providers, training institutions, and medical interpreter associations,” said John Weiner, Chief Science Officer with PSI Services (<http://corporate.psonline.com/>).

“Now that the subject matter expert review and rating of test items has been finalized, it is important that we proceed with the final pilot phase of the written exam,” said Dr. Nelva Lee, Interpreter Trainer, The Medical Interpreting and Translating Institute Online (MiTio) President, and National Board member.

Individuals are invited to apply to participate in the National Board written exam pilot, which was launched this month with a call for participants. Practicing medical interpreters may sign up to take the written exam pilot here at <http://www.imiaweb.org/certification/PilotApplication.asp>. There is a \$75 fee to cover the proctoring for the pilot that will be discounted when a candidate takes the final National Board exam.

According to Izabel Arocha, President of the International Medical Interpreters Association, pilot participants will enable testing experts to assess each examination item for construct validity, relevance, and reliability. This is an important final step for moving the process of national certification forward and protecting the interest of all stakeholders who are likely to be impacted by certification on an on-going basis.

"We would like to finalize the written pilot phase soon, so we can keep up with our promise to have the exams ready for the public in 2009," said Arocha.

About the National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters

The National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters will be a non-profit organization, formed from an independent group of industry professionals that represent all key stakeholder groups, including professional medical interpreters, trainers, employers and regulators. The National Board will serve as the certifying entity and will be given independent authority over all essential certification decisions. It will not be responsible for accreditation of educational or training programs or courses of study leading to the certification. The formation and structure of the National Board of Certification will adhere to the standards and requirements for certification program governance mandated by the National Organization for Competency Assurance. For more information please go to www.certifiedmedicalinterpreters.org.

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