



Translating a Haemophilia Poster into ten official languages

Alice Banze, Registered Nurse, South African Haemophilia Foundation.
Thandiwe Nxumalo, Wits Language School University of the Witwatersrand

Objectives:



Background:

Haemophilia is a rare inherited, sex linked, lifelong bleeding disorder. The South African Haemophilia National Registry shows 40% of people with bleeding disorder remain undiagnosed in the community due to lack of information and understanding of their condition.

‘SA Health review 2012/2013⁽¹⁾, The language barrier : the challenge to equitable health care’ by Nadia Hussey stated “*commitment must be made to implementing strategies that provide a multilingual patient base healthcare services.*” “*The true depth of the impact of the language barrier is often disregarded by health care practitioners and policy makers*” and” *the language barrier is simply that: a barrier to the accessing of health care*” Levin⁽²⁾ 2006 study showed that “*language and cultural barriers were greater than structural and socio economic barriers.*”

Purpose:

The translation of the English version of the Haemophilia poster into ten other official South African languages was done to ensure that all the racial and ethnic groups have access to Haemophilia information regardless of their level of literacy, to be able to understand the condition and be cooperative.

“*The single aim of providing translation is to ensure the written materials are effective, meaning that they provide clear and comprehensible information and influences the beliefs, attitudes and intentions of individuals so that they make health orientated decision*”. (Nxumalo Thandiwe et al. 2013).⁽³⁾

“*Informed medical decision making leads to increased Quality of Care*”. (Mark Skinner - 2013).⁽⁴⁾

Methods:

Translation was originally carried out by Haemophilia trained nurses from different clinics serving different language groups. This was to ensure the language was used in context with the disorder. The translated scripts were taken to the University of the Witwatersrand for a professional translation and validation.

Difficulties

Back translation was used for the validation process.

This highlighted the isomorphic and idiosyncrasy of languages. In many SA languages there are no direct translation for some ‘*medical jargon which consist of highly standardized language*’⁽⁵⁾, so these words are paraphrased or borrowings are used. *Indigenized loan words are often modified according to pronunciation. African speakers in urban areas where multilingualism and borrowing are common, are more tolerant of loan words than those in the rural areas.*⁽⁵⁾

Back translations also “*answer the linguistic accuracy requirement only*”⁽³⁾

Several rewording of the translation were required before the final translation was accepted by the haemophilia health workers and the linguistic experts.

Results:

The translated versions were formatted as posters and referred to the National Department of Health for approval. Translated posters were endorsed by the Department of Health, 70 000 copies were prepared for distribution in all the nine provinces in the country.

Conclusions:

Following the distribution of translated Haemophilia posters, there is anticipation that the “*message will be clearly understood by the reader*”⁽⁵⁾ resulting in a better informed South African Community regarding Haemophilia.

References:

- 1 The language barrier: the overlooked challenge to equitable health care. SA Health Review 2012/2013 Nadia Hussey
- 2 Levin M. Language as a barrier to care for Xhosa speaking patients at a South African paediatric teaching hospital. S Afr Med J 2006 : 96(10): 1076-9
- 3 Effective communication across language barriers in public health settings Nxumalo Thandiwe et al. 2013
- 4 Mark Skinner- 2013
- 5 Translating public information texts on health issues into languages of limited diffusion in South Africa. Alet Kruger .dept of Linguistics UNISA. To be published in Valdeon, Roberto A 2010. Translating information . University of Oviedo Press (Eduino) Spain

