Comparing Medical Interpretation Services In Person, By Phone, and By Video Over IP

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We report on a research study conducted collaborative by the National Library of Medicine and the Medical University of South Carolina in which two hundred and forty patients were randomly assigned to receiving medical interpretation services either in person, by phone, or by video over IP. Patients, interpreters, and health care providers independently rated the quality of the encounter using a ten item scale. A subset of ten patients in each condition were interviewed about the method used to provide the interpretation service as were all seven interpreters and twenty four of the twenty five providers participating. Encounters with in person interpretation were rated significantly higher than those with remote interpretation. Encounters with remote video interpretation were rated higher than telephonic, but the differences were not statistically significant. Interview data support these ratings, but suggest a stronger preference for video interpretation over telephonic when the service has to be provided remotely.