

Subject: [JIT] Letter to the Editor: Hospitals must provide interpreters for deaf

From the Akron, Ohio /Beacon Journal/:

My wife, who was deaf, was a patient recently at two hospitals in the Akron area. During her entire stay, she never received the aid of an interpreter when an explanation of things was needed.

<http://www.ohio.com/editorial/vop/38683839.html>

Hospitals must provide interpreters for deaf

My wife, who was deaf, was a patient recently at two hospitals in the Akron area. During her entire stay, she never received the aid of an interpreter when an explanation of things was needed. She asked numerous times in writing to call her daughter who can sign. The written response was that the hospitals did not know what to do, and they would find out. They never came back with an answer. They did not call her daughter.

The day my wife was released began with a stress test scheduled for 9 a.m. The doctor in this department started this horrendous day by becoming angry with her. (Her feelings stemmed from his facial expressions.) She could not hear what was being said. Then she was taken back to her room. She was told the test had been rescheduled for 11 a.m, then again for 3 p.m.

Throughout this day, she received her medications on an empty stomach, making her extremely ill. She tried to tell them in writing numerous times that she was nauseated. The test was finally canceled. The doctor didn't feel that it was necessary.

Later in the evening, my wife was released for short-term therapy. Soon after she arrived there, the fire department was called to take her to another hospital due to a severe drop in her blood pressure. Again, there wasn't an interpreter or anyone called in to communicate with her while she was evaluated in the emergency room.

How did they know, without asking, how she was feeling and the symptoms she was having? Her family later was told she was doing much better.

A few hours later, I arrived at the hospital to find her sedated and on a breathing machine in intensive care. I was told it was unlikely she would recover. I never felt so sick in my life, knowing she went

through all of this without someone she could communicate with, to help her understand exactly what was going on.

Imagine being taken all over the hospital and having things done to you and you have no idea why --- because you can't hear anything. You are reading notes here and there from different people that say: scheduled; rescheduled; you can't eat; you have to; sorry; don't know; will see; I'll ask; try to find out; wait.

Hospitals and doctors are required under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act to provide interpreters. They also have been notified by the Ohio Association for the Deaf about the seriousness of this situation and the problems the deaf community has had for years with no response.

Maybe someone can tell me why and what it takes to get people to understand how important this is.

I was never able to talk to my wife again. She died the following day.  
Clyde D. Wilson  
Akron