

# Deaf Health Care Access

Michael McKee, MD,  
MPH

January 19, 2012



# Supporters

- Deaf Health Talks is possible through the support of:
  - Rochester Recreation Club for the Deaf (“REAP”)
  - Deaf Health Community Committee (DHCC)



# Goals of Presentation

- Introduction
- Access Issues
- Benefits of Accessible Health Care
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Finding Your Doctor
- Helping Your Doctor Help You
- Future Directions



# Health Communication Issues

- Deaf people are at highest risk for poor communication in healthcare (McEwen, et al., 1988)
  - **Language barriers**
    - Doctors and nurses rarely know ASL
    - Most health information sources are not available in ASL



# Health Communication Issues

- **Communication barriers**
  - Most healthcare communication requires use of speech or listening
  - Health information is often shared by talking or depends on hearing (TV, radio)
  - Leads to health knowledge gaps!



# Medical Communication Issues

- Many Deaf individuals desire sign language interpreter with doctors
  - Yet. . . Doctors use note writing and lipreading the most
- **Communication Breakdown!**
- Deaf people who sign see doctors less frequently than general population (Barnett, et al. 2002)



# Benefits of Accessible Health Care

- Research is limited but what do we know?
- Accessible communication is the key!
  - If your doctor knows ASL- you were more likely to get more preventive services and screenings (McKee, et al. *AJPM*, 2011)
  - If you go to a Deaf-friendly clinic where interpreters are available, you were more likely to get more preventive services as well (MacKinney, et al., *J Gen Intern Med*, 1995)
  - ASL fluent providers and medical interpreters were key for Deaf individuals to learn and improve their health knowledge (McKee, et al., *Disabil Health J*, 2011)



# Steps to Improve your Health Communication

- Find an ASL fluent provider
- Find a clinic that provides interpreters (willingly!)
- Notify your health communication needs prior to appointment
- Think how to describe your concerns before the appointment



# Steps to Improve your Health Communication

- Request an interpreter- It is your right!
  - Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)
  - In person interpreter
  - Be timely with your request- avoid last minute
  - Educate the health care staff on their responsibility
- If you don't understand, ask the doctor to explain it again!
- If you still don't understand, ask the doctor to explain it in a different way!



# Medical Communication

- Websites are offering ASL
- [www.deafmd.org](http://www.deafmd.org)
- [www.deafdoc.com](http://www.deafdoc.com)
- <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/languages/asl.html>
- Some web based videos and YouTube offer captioning



# Deaf Friendly Websites

http://www.umc.rochester.edu/ncdhr/

National Center for Deaf Health Research (NCDHR) - Rochester, NY - Windows Internet Explorer

National Center for Deaf Health Research NCDHR

UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER MEDICAL CENTER

About Community Committee NCDHR Committees Partners Research Information Training Events Links

**NCDHR**  
National Center for Deaf Health Research  
Rochester Prevention Research Center

Working for a Healthy Deaf Community

Welcome to DeafMD - DeafMD.org - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.deafmd.org/

DeafMD.org  
Health Education in American Sign Language

DISEASES A-Z UNDERSTANDING TESTS FIND A DOCTOR DONATE NEWS ABOUT US CONTACT US

Download This Video

DISEASES & ILLNESSES A-Z  
CLICK HERE TO SEARCH OUR DATABASE

UNDERSTANDING TESTS  
CLICK HERE TO SEARCH OUR DATABASE

FIND DEAF-FRIENDLY DOCTORS IN YOUR AREA

This video brought to you by

BRUARY 25: SUMMARY OF THE NCDHR RETREAT IN [ASL VLOG AND](#)

**NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS (SCROLL DOWN):**

Research Concepts (Deaf Weight Wise Research Project Summer 2011)  
Internships (January 20, 2011)  
Internship (Now open)  
Internship (December 4, 2010)

Online Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community Resource Directory

[H1N1 \(SWINE FLU\) QUESTIONS & ANSWERS & FAQs \(SEPTEMBER 2009\)](#)

Trusted sites 100%

National Center for Deaf Health Research

MedlinePlus  
Trusted Health Information for You

A service of the U.S. National Library of Medicine  
NIH National Institutes of Health

About MedlinePlus Site Map FAQs Contact Us

Search MedlinePlus GO

Health Topics Drugs & Supplements Videos & Cool Tools

Find your topic by first letter:  
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Health Information in ASL (American Sign Language)

Alter Surgery

- Home Care Instructions Alter Surgery
- [American Sign Language \(ASL\) Multimedia Bilingual Health Information Translations](#)

Alcoholism

- Substance Abuse or Dependence
- [American Sign Language \(ASL\) Multimedia Bilingual Health Information Translations](#)

RHIN  
Refuge Health Information Network  
Multicultural health information

Dr. CC

# Americans with Disabilities Act

- ADA specifies that accommodations must be made to ensure effective communication
- This can be done through auxiliary aids and services (qualified interpreters, assistive listening devices, notetakers, etc.)
- Exceptions:
  - Undue financial burden
  - Accommodations would fundamentally alter the nature of the service provided



# Enforcement of ADA

- Department of Justice
- Private attorneys
  - Punishes through monetary awards for the plaintiffs
  - Most common method of litigation



# Department of Justice- Enforcement

- ADA Litigation
- Formal Settlements
- Other Settlements
- Mediation
- Technical Assistance



# Deaf Health Care Access

- Many Deaf people do not have a regular doctor
  - Use emergency room or urgent care
    - Expensive!!
    - Not able to do preventive and regular care- should only be for emergencies!
  - Have Medicaid or Medicare
    - Many doctors do not accept this insurance



# Finding Your Doctor

- Ask friends to get ideas on which doctor you should contact
- Contact your insurance to find out which doctors accept your insurance
- Call ahead of time to find if doctor is accepting new patients
- Educate the clinic about your communication needs



# Helping Your Doctor Help You

- Obtain your old medical records for review
  - Some may charge to make a copy
- Fill out medical forms for the doctor to review
  - Current and Past Medical History
  - Family History
  - Medications
  - Allergies
  - Surgeries
  - Immunizations (shots)



# Communicating With Your Doctor

- Most communication takes place at clinic (appointments)
- Phone call
  - Frustrating if on hold
  - Best option if urgent needs
  - Educate them on Video Relay Service (VRS)
  - May require call back or leave message



# Communicating With Your Doctor

- Email or patient portals
  - Email may not be secure- many restrictions in sharing health information
  - Portals are secure but require to set up account



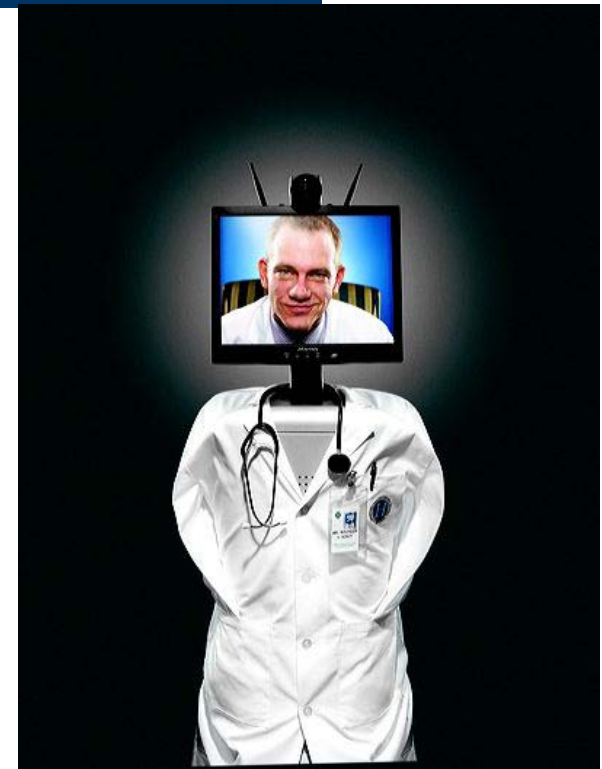
# Communicating With Your Doctor

- Portals is preferred:
  - Secure and safe to communicate
  - Allows for sharing of lab results, patient plans, letters
  - Message notification through email
  - Will be able to manage your medications, your patient information
  - Will be able to schedule your own appointments



# Future Directions

- Use of videophones or web cameras for medical visits or health education
- Already started for:
  - Psychology
  - Cardiology (Heart)
  - Dermatology (Skin)
  - Pediatrics (Children)
  - Otolaryngology (ENT)



# Future Directions

- Technology for telemedicine is already available!
- Yet barriers remain:
  - Lack of standards for telemedicine (legal, technology rules)
  - Insurance companies frequently do not pay for this service
    - Out of area provider
  - State laws and licensing boards mostly prohibit telemedicine across state lines
  - Electronic medical records (usually needed for telemedicine) are expensive



# Future Directions

- Use of VRI (video remote interpreting) will increase
- Use of voice recognition software will provide some language access for some
- Online health educator



# Questions???

- Thank you!
- Next Deaf Health Talk on February

