

Browse Topics

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- [Health Plans](#)
- [Health Policy](#)
- [Health Privacy](#)
- [Healthy Families](#)
- [iHealth & Technology](#)
- [Insurance Markets](#)
- [Medi-Cal](#)
- [Medicare](#)
- [Medicare Drug Benefit](#)
- [Mental Health Funding](#)
- [Physician Organizations](#)
- [Prescription Drugs](#)
- [Quality](#)
- [Special Populations](#)
- [Stem Cell Research](#)
- [Workforce](#)

Upcoming Events

- [California Medicare Coalition Meeting](#)
Aug. 9 | San Francisco
- [Health Dialogues: Health Care and the Media](#)
Aug. 17, 8 p.m. PT | Broadcast
- [California Health Policy and Data Advisory Committee Meeting](#)
Aug. 21 | Monterey
- [Community Forum](#)
Aug. 22 | Los Angeles

Past Issues

Select Date

Other Resources

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- [California Nursing Home Search](#)
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Past Issue

Around California

forward [next article](#)

Videoconferencing Provides Access to Interpreters

August 8, 2006

A consortium of medical organizations, consumer advocates and technology companies on Monday unveiled an Internet video phone service for hospitals that allows patients to receive interpreter services, the [San Jose Mercury News](#) reports.

The system was launched as a pilot project at San Mateo Medical Center, San Joaquin General Hospital and Contra Costa Regional Medical Center (Tribble, *San Jose Mercury News*, 8/8).

The Health Care Interpreter Network uses software developed by Cisco Systems in San Jose and a videoconferencing device made by Tandberg to connect doctors and patients with interpreters at different hospitals or other remote locations "within seconds," the [San Francisco Chronicle](#) reports.

Hospital executives said the system allows in-house interpreters to work with three to four times as many patients because they don't have to travel throughout the hospital or between clinics. In addition, hospitals will have a wider range of accessible languages by using interpreters at other hospitals.

Hospital executives declined to specify the cost of the system but said the devices used are relatively inexpensive, according to the *Chronicle* (Colliver, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 8/8).

Other hospitals can buy into the program and immediately begin linking to interpreters (*San Jose Mercury News*, 8/8).

About one million HMO members in California with limited English proficiency are at risk of receiving lower-quality care because of language barriers, a [University of California report](#) released in May found (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 8/8).

back

[next article](#)

forward

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02/16/2006
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11/14/2005

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