

## Hispanic Heritage Month: Collective Heritage: Honoring the Past, Inspiring the Future

Source: <https://www.uchicagomedicineadventhealth.org/blog/celebrating-hispanic-heritage-month-latino-health-care-contributions-achievements-and-awareness>

Since 1968, Americans have observed National Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 – October 15) by celebrating the vast histories, cultures and contributions of Americans whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America and South America. About one in six people living in the U.S. is Hispanic, which is predicted to keep growing.

We are excited to honor the tremendous contributions of Hispanic health care professionals. We also take this time to encourage wellness and health equity for Hispanic populations, propelling our nation towards a brighter future.

### Health equity

Health equity means everyone has the same opportunities to reach their highest health potential. Achieving health equity requires breaking barriers to health care historically experienced by marginalized groups due to determinants beyond their control, such as socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, language, gender, age, disability status and other factors.

### Health disparities

In stark contrast to health equity, health disparities are differences in the incidence, prevalence and mortality of a disease and the related adverse health conditions that exist among specific population groups. Here are some of the health disparities that impact our Hispanic communities:

#### Language Barriers

- About 46% of Hispanic people say they have a family member or close friend who requires interpretation services or a Spanish-speaking health care provider.
- 50% of Hispanics say that it's difficult to understand the process of getting health care and have had negative experiences while receiving it.

#### Higher Prevalence of Medical Conditions

- **Chronic Liver Disease:** Hispanics have a higher risk of developing some liver diseases, and they are 50% more likely to die from it.
- **COVID-19:** Hispanics have been impacted more by COVID-19 — including experiencing a greater severity of disease and accounting for 41% of COVID-19-related deaths in 2020.
- **Depression:** Hispanics are 1.6 times more likely to suffer with depression.
- **Diabetes:** The increased risk of diabetes in Hispanic communities is often influenced by genetics since it can be hereditary. Diet can also increase the risk. Hispanics are 66% more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes.
- **High Blood Pressure:** Nearly 1 in 4 Hispanic people have high blood pressure, which can be a precursor to a heart attack, stroke, kidney disease or heart failure.
- **HIV:** Hispanics are 3.6 times more likely to be diagnosed with HIV.
- **Obesity:** Hispanics are 20% more likely to live with obesity.
- **Tuberculosis:** Hispanics are 8 times more likely to contract tuberculosis.

### Hispanic Contributions to Healthcare

As we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, we recognize and pay tribute to the amazing contributions made by Hispanics to medicine and public health. Here are just a few of the innovators whose achievements continue to better our lives every day.



### September 2025 Calendar

National Hispanic Heritage Month  
Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

- 5 – Milad an-Nabi (Islam)
- 11 – Nayrouz (Coptic Orthodox)
- 7-13 – Suicide Prevention Week (US)
- 9/15–10/15 – National Hispanic Heritage Month
- 16 – Mexican Independence Day
- 17 – World Patient Safety Day
- 21 – Pchum Ben (Buddhism)
- 22 – Fall Equinox (US)
- 22 – Mysore Dasara (Hinduism)
- 23 – International Day of Sign Languages
- 23-24 – Rosh Hashanah (Judaism)
- 27 – Ancestor Appreciation Day (US)
- 29 – Michaelmas (Catholicism)
- 30 – International Translation Day

**Antonia Novello, MD**

Born in Fajardo, Puerto Rico, Dr. Antonia Novello was the first woman and person of Hispanic heritage to become Surgeon General of the United States. As Surgeon General, Dr. Novello was among the first to recognize the need to focus on women with AIDS and neonatal transmission of HIV.

Dr. Novello found new opportunities for Hispanic/Latinx Americans to participate in health issues, convening national and regional meetings to discuss community health needs. She raised national awareness in the medical profession about the domestic violence epidemic in America and worked to elevate public consciousness about underage drinking and alcohol abuse.

**Serena Auñón-Chancellor, MD**

Dr. Auñón-Chancellor, the first Hispanic physician to travel to space, spent six months conducting research aboard the International Space Station (ISS) in 2018. Her work in space included experiments related to cancer and Parkinson's disease.

Dr. Auñón-Chancellor fulfilled her childhood dream of becoming an astronaut in 2011. Before that, she completed medical school in 2001, and earned a master's degree in public health in 2007. She notes that treating COVID-19 patients and traveling to space taught her the importance of self-care and teamwork.

**Severo Ochoa, MD**

Dr. Ochoa's career covers several domains of molecular biology and biochemistry. He discovered an enzyme that can synthesize ribonucleic acid, a key step in understanding the human genetic code.

In recognition of Dr. Ochoa's work, he became the first Hispanic person to be awarded the Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine.

**Interpreters vs AI - the key differences**

Source: <https://www.interprefy.com/resources/blog/interpreters-vs-ai-11-key-differences>

With the rapid advancements in AI technology, real-time translation of meetings or event speeches is now possible through AI-powered speech translation solutions. This is a domain that was once exclusively occupied by simultaneous interpreters, leading to the question: what sets the two apart?

But first, let's explore the similarities between simultaneous interpreters and AI speech translation solutions. Both interpreters and AI share the remarkable ability to provide instantaneous translation of speech from one language to another, effectively bridging communication gaps during meetings, conferences, or live events and ensuring understanding of what is being communicated.

**Different approaches to translation accuracy**

This may well be the biggest difference of all: Interpreters interpret and currently, AI translates.

Interpreters possess a keen attention to detail when it comes to accuracy, with the ultimate goal of conveying the essential message as precisely as possible to the audience. They use various techniques like summarizing and paraphrasing to convey the message's meaning as accurately as possible. Interpreters must strike a delicate balance between accuracy and practicality, carefully navigating the terrain of conveying the essence of a message while still maintaining its true meaning.

Unlike interpreters who may summarize or paraphrase the message to convey its essential meaning, AI speech translation solutions take a verbatim approach to ensure no information is lost, even if the speaker talks at a rapid pace. This approach can offer the advantage of preserving the exact words used by the speaker, which can be particularly important in legal or medical contexts where precise terminology is critical. However, this can also result in a less natural-sounding translation that may not capture the speaker's intended tone or style, which could be important in more casual or

creative settings. Nonetheless, AI technology is rapidly advancing, and we can expect to see more sophisticated approaches to translation in the near future.

### **Consistency in quality**

Consistency in quality is another factor that distinguishes interpreters from AI speech translators. While interpreters' skills, experience, and topic expertise may vary, AI solutions provide general consistency in quality, although quality can still fluctuate depending on language combinations, topic areas, engines used, and terminology used.

### **Dealing with cultural subtleties**

Linguists are cultural and language experts. They have a deep understanding of the nuances of language, including the subtle differences in tone, humor, and sarcasm. They can pick up on the underlying meaning of a message, as well as non-verbal cues, which is difficult to replicate with AI.

While AI speech translation solutions are getting better at understanding language, they still struggle with the complexities of humor, irony or non-verbal cues. Jokes, puns, sarcasm, irony, and wordplay can be lost in translation. This is because AI is focused on the literal meaning of the words, rather than the underlying message and it cannot pick up on the tone or inflexion of the speaker's voice either, which can be crucial to understanding the intended meaning. By incorporating these approaches into their practice, medical interpreters can demonstrate compassion while still adhering to their role boundaries and ensuring accurate communication between patients and healthcare providers.

### **Performance over time**

Interpretation is a challenging profession that demands intense focus and cognitive agility. Simultaneous interpreters must listen, process, and translate speech in real time, which is mentally taxing. To alleviate this pressure, interpreters often work in pairs and alternate every 15-30 minutes. During full-day assignments, maintaining their performance levels can be quite a challenge and fatigue may impact performance over time.

Conversely, AI is not faced with the same challenge and will deliver consistent performance over time.

### **Dealing with accents and dialects**

Accents and dialects can pose challenges for interpreters if they have no previous experience with them. However, most professional interpreters are generally trained to handle a variety of accents and dialects, and they can pick up on subtle differences in pronunciation.

On the other hand, AI speech translation solutions rely on machine learning algorithms that are trained on large datasets of audio and text and these algorithms are designed to handle different accents and dialects.

Aside from understanding accents and dialects, what's paramount for successful performance for both interpreters and AI, is the quality of the sound. Clear audio ensures that interpreters can accurately hear and interpret the speaker's words, while AI speech translation solutions can correctly transcribe and translate them. Background noise, poor microphone quality, or low volume can hinder both human and AI speech translation, causing errors and inaccuracies in the final output.

### **Both need to be prepared for the assignment**

To achieve successful real-time translation, both human interpreters and AI speech translation solutions require adequate preparation beforehand. Interpreters need to be provided with necessary information about the event, including the topics to be discussed, the speakers, and any specific terminology that may be used. They also need to have access to relevant materials such as presentations and documents.

Similarly, certain providers of AI speech translation optimize the AI engine output further. In order to ensure event-specific terminologies such as speaker names, brand or product names, or unique industry terms don't get missed, the engines can be customized through glossary features to accurately capture these terms.

### **Language coverage and availability**

Although AI speech translation solutions can currently support a wide range of languages with impressive accuracy, their language coverage is limited to those with high volumes of available training data. As AI technology continues to improve, more languages will be added to its repertoire.

For languages with lower volumes of available data, dialects, and oral languages, professional interpreters remain essential. One of the advantages of AI, however, is its availability and scalability, which can support multiple events simultaneously. This can be especially helpful for event planners who may struggle to find suitable interpreters for a specific language combination with short notice.

### **Key considerations for buyers of simultaneous translation services**

In conclusion, both simultaneous interpreters and AI speech translation solutions have their unique strengths and limitations, and they can complement each other.

Interpreters have the unique ability to adapt their rendition of the speech to the cultural context and non-verbal cues. Meanwhile, AI never gets tired and can provide complete and accurate translation with consistency in quality at a relatively low-cost point.

This provides event planners with the freedom to choose the approach that best fits their unique challenges and goals. More than that, event planners can combine both approaches to scale up their language offerings. Some languages can be supported through simultaneous interpretation, while others are supported through AI.

Some of the key considerations event planners should plan for when deciding on which approach they want to opt for include:

- What are the required languages? Is it possible to source interpreters of these languages? Are these languages supported by AI?
- What is the budget available for interpretation?
- How deep is the level of cultural nuance, emotion and non-verbal language that needs to be reflected in the translation?

## New Staff Profile: Polina Garcia

Polina is the newest staff member to join the Spanish-language team at MIS. Polina began her interpreting journey as a teenager in Russia, assisting American missionaries during various outreach events in St. Petersburg. Her early work included interpreting on the streets, in orphanages, and at a Bible Institute. After completing a Spanish language course at the State University and a Spanish tour guide/interpreter program, she entered the tourism industry—first in Russia and later in the Dominican Republic, where she lived for nearly a decade.

In 2015, Polina relocated with her family to Sacramento, California. Shortly thereafter, she completed 40 hours of medical interpreter training in Spanish, along with several specialized courses. This training paved the way for her to begin working as a freelance medical interpreter.

Throughout her career, Polina has collaborated with numerous agencies, supporting patients across a wide range of medical specialties. Today, she is proud to be part of the team at UC Davis Health, where she applies her extensive experience, provides effective patient support, and continues to grow professionally.

In her free time, Polina enjoys traveling with family and friends, staying active through exercise, and learning new languages. She has already studied Portuguese, French, and Dari, and is currently passionate about learning Hebrew. Welcome aboard, Polina!

We are glad to have you as a part of our Medical Interpreting team!

The International Translation Day 2025 theme is **"Powered by human thought,"** highlighting the crucial role of human creativity, critical thinking, and cultural awareness in the age of AI and machine translation.

*This theme emphasizes that despite technological advancements, the unique ability of human professionals to provide meaning, context, and cultural nuance remains indispensable in professional translation.*

