

# Language Barriers

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## Dr. Gordon Gibbs

*By Dr. Gordon F. Gibbs*

In this article, Dr. Gibbs and Dr. Eidson discuss specific efforts that can be made by health-care institutions to help Spanish-speaking Hispanics in the United States better access the health-care system.

### **Q: Dr. Eidson,**

*University of North Carolina researchers reported back in 2008 that Spanish-speaking Hispanics in the United States have difficulty accessing the health-care system. What can be done, and what has been done to rectify this situation?*

**Dr. Eidson:** Unfortunately, it is true that individuals who are Limited English Proficient (LEP) often encounter health care complications arising from language and culture barriers. To improve the situation, health-care institutions should launch a company-wide multilingual/multicultural health care services initiative for patients with limited English proficiency. Such a multilingual and multicultural health care initiative is aligned with the goals of The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), which aims to reduce the number of uninsured Americans, improve the overall quality of health care, and contain health care costs.

*Q: What are some of the practical steps that a health-care institution can do to reach out to linguistically isolated households, in particular the Spanish-speaking population?*

**Dr. Eidson:** A health-care institution should make it a priority when hiring to look for medical staff with multiple language and cultural skills. For the Spanish-speaking population, for example, institutions should reach out to the Latino market and have on staff Spanish speaking support. They should also translate internal documents and forms into the Spanish language to better service this population. For RMVI, this outreach has been very effective at Trinity Vein Institute in Arlington, Texas, and also in Colorado.

Finally, health-care facilities with a website presence should work to provide online digital content in Spanish for those Hispanics who do not conduct their online searches in English, and routinely provide informative and instructional content in both English and Spanish, including press releases.

*Q: Dr. Eidson, are there companies out there that can help with a multilingual and multicultural health care initiative?*



**Dr. Eidson:** Yes, there are; for instance, Trinity and RMVI are partnering with a company called CyraCom, LLC, which is a diversified language services company that provides Over-the-Phone interpretation, translation and localization, video remote interpretation, on-site interpretation, and testing and training. CyraCom recommends that outreach efforts take into account language and culture barriers from initial conception in order to have better success with linguistically isolated households, and that organizations should have appropriate language services in place and staff that are properly trained to use them.

*About Dr. Gordon F. Gibbs*

*The founder and chief medical officer of Trinity Vein Institute and Rocky Mountain Vein Institute, Dr. Gordon F. Gibbs is a Mayo Clinic trained interventional radiologist board certified in phlebology, diagnostic radiology and fellowship trained in vascular/interventional radiology. He is an active member of the American College of Phlebology and The Society of Interventional Radiology. Dr. Gibbs is also Medical Director of Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology at St. Mary-Corwin Medical Center in Pueblo, Colorado. For more information, please visit <http://www.trinityvein.com/>, send an email to [info@trinityvein.com](mailto:info@trinityvein.com) or call 888.730.VEIN (8346).*

