

## **Nomination for Indiana Perinatal Network Award demonstrating a creative or innovative approach to marketing or communicating with professional or consumer audiences**

Beginning in 2007, the Foundation became increasingly concerned about a large influx of several thousand Burmese refugees in Allen County and their poor health conditions. Of particular concern, has been to help non-English speaking refugees and their healthcare providers effectively bridge the language and cultural barriers -- to effectively communicate. Initially, the refugees and healthcare community relied upon face to face bi-lingual interpreters who were primarily very expensive and poorly trained or family members who lacked sufficient knowledge of medical terminology in either language to accurately communicate important messages. After three years, many local physician providers began limiting or turning away their non-English speaking Burmese clients as they were unable to affordably and reliably communicate and therefore, treat these clients.

In fall 2010, St. Joseph Community Health Foundation convened partnering organizations to create an innovative program addressing this communication issue by offering virtual, high quality interpretation and health care navigation services at low-cost rates to meet the special needs of the large number of newly arrived Burmese refugees in Allen County. The program offers trained, culturally sensitive staff who from a central location: use secure video conferencing (similar to Skype or Facetime) technology to provide interpretation for medical appointments and health education; assist medical offices and the non-English speaking clients with appointment setting and transportation services; provide case management and navigation services to assure clients have access to medical care and benefits; and enhance communication between patient and provider thus improving overall health and patient care outcomes throughout the city. Between January – December 2011 6,886 calls have resulted in service to 795 distinct clients working with 12 different network providers including Parkview Hospital, FW-Allen County Health Department, Neighborhood Health Clinic, and the Parkview Physicians Providers Group Members.

The response has been extremely positive from both the medical community and non-English speaking clients. Allow us to share this story about the impact on just one mother and her son. For several appointments, our nurse interpreter assisted a mom with her 18 month old son by interpreting through video conferencing at her son's medical appointments. The mom responded well to the friendly face with Asian features similar to her own, trusting the clear communication being relayed from the physician. Two months later, the child fell ill and the mom admitted her son into the hospital but struggled in communicating with the medical team through the occasional face-to-face interpreter. When the nurse interpreter happened to be in the hospital on other business, the mom saw and recognized her from the video conferencing. She quickly sought her assistance and for the first time in several days, began communicating with the hospital nursing staff and doctor overcoming the communication and cultural barriers plaguing everyone from working as a team to treat the little boy and develop a wellness and discharge plan. The mom's story underscores the value of using innovative strategies, like electronic video conferencing, to build a trusted, low cost, effective communication channel between moms/patients and the medical team. Since then, the hospital floor has established a computer with a camera available for on-demand videoconferencing interpretation Monday – Friday, 7am – 6pm.



*Photo of the medical interpreters/healthcare navigators communicating via video conferencing providing medical interpretation between a non-English speaking patient and her physician in Parkview Hospital's Emergency Department.*

Description of how this program integrates IPN's mission and standards in his/her contributions to women's and infants' health. The mission of IPN is to lead Indiana to improve the health of all mothers and babies.

The St. Joseph Community Health Foundation and its partners, like Parkview Health, in this not-for-profit program adhere to the highest standards of care when working to improve the health of all mothers and babies consistent with IPN's standards.

One of the challenges of medical interpretation is to find bi-lingual individuals with demonstrated ability in both languages being spoken inclusive of medical terminology and cultural competency. Training in best practices is also critical. While the country still lacks medical certification criteria, professional associations have been building recommendations on standards. The St. Joseph Community Health Foundation has adapted these as well as sent all of their interpreters for professional training in medical terminology, tested each to affirm their competency, and works with Parkview Hospital and the local Health Department to provide ongoing health education training to the medical interpreter/healthcare navigators.

Moms and their families directly benefit from this in many ways. For example, now all non-English speaking moms after delivering their babies at Parkview benefit from virtual one-on-one health education sessions via video conferencing with the nurse interpreter/health navigator at Parkview Hospital. Working the OB staff, the nurse interpreter reviews the educational and discharge plan plus answers all of the new mom's questions about American healthcare for child wellness. Upon discharge, the nurse interpreter is available to help answer by phone any of the mom's concerns helping to connect her with her health professionals. Recently, it was invaluable in helping a new mom learn how to re-admit her infant who had become jaundiced.

Through this innovative communication strategy – the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation its twelve partners including Parkview Health and the Allen County Health Department, we are improving the health of many more moms and their children in northeast Indiana.