



Language Services as Part of the Patient-Centered Culture:  
Case Study with Palomar Health



PALOMAR  
HEALTH  
SPECIALIZING IN YOU



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## Community Profile

With three facilities, 500 inpatient beds, and an 850 square mile area of patient coverage, Palomar Health is the largest public health district in California. They have achieved many awards and distinctions in the last few years, such as the Top 100 Places to Work in Healthcare, the Premier Award for Quality, the Compass Award Winner, and the California Award for Performance Excellence.

Between their three facilities, Palomar serves a broad spectrum of needs for their surrounding community. Their main facility, Palomar Medical Center, specializes in inpatient, acute care, intensive care, and other emergency services. Palomar Health Downtown Campus focuses primarily on women's and children's care, boasting a large birth center, pediatric care facilities, and behavioral, speech, and physical therapy. The Pomodoro facility has a wide range of specialties, serving emergency, rehabilitation, outpatient, and any other patient needs that may arise.

## Client Profile

Located throughout Escondido and San Marcos, California, Palomar Health serves a very diverse range of patients. According to the US Census, 48% of the population of Escondido speaks a language other than English at home, with San Marcos following closely with 39%. As a result, these cities have a large population of families that do not speak English, and these statistics reflect the hospital patient base. In any given month, 20-25% of Palomar Health's patient base can be non-English speakers. Patients' language requests include Spanish, Tagalog, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Russian, and many others.

## Language Services Program

With such a large and diverse population, Palomar Health needed to develop a strong language services program. This is where Joe Molinoski, comes in. He is the Supervisor for Pipeline Career Services at Palomar Health and, in collaboration with the HR department, oversees the entire organization's language services.

Palomar Health has an impressive, three-pronged approach to their language services program:

### Phone Interpretation

Palomar Health uses CyraCom's Over-the-Phone Interpretation at every location, including the three main campuses and all outlying facilities.

### Staff Interpreters

At their three main campuses, Palomar has staff interpreters on hand to support the main languages. Each of these interpreters serves a dual role: in addition to being an interpreter, each is equally skilled as a nurse, secretary, technician, etc. This has proved to be a very cost effective move for Palomar, as these employees can help out in other ways when they are not interpreting. "We wanted to

be able to provide the opportunity for positions of a higher skill set," said Molinoski. "There may be times when we don't have a patient for them to interpret for. When this happens, these employees can be used in a different capacity."

In order to make sure their staff interpreters are qualified, Palomar Health relies on CyraCom's Interpreter Skills Assessment. This test provides an evaluation of a candidate's ability to interpret clinical encounters, measuring their knowledge of medical vocabulary and ability to accurately convert messages from one language to another. This is embedded as a step in the hiring process to make sure that candidates have the right skills before they interpret.

### Pathmaker Internship Student Interpreter Development Program

Palomar Health created a very unique interpreter development program for students interested in becoming professional interpreters for healthcare as part of their system-wide Pathmaker Internship program. These students, many of whom are going through certified language programs already, must first complete a language assessment from Palomar and receive their in-house training. Once this process is complete, they participate in a year-long internship, interpreting in the hospital for real patients in real-life scenarios. While expanding their clinical experience, they provide much-needed support to the hospital and gain valuable professional development. According to Joe Molinoski, the program is great outreach for the hospital, and great experience for the students. "It's a great program. We give them an opportunity to practice their skills in an actual live environment and better prepare for a future career in healthcare."

## Benefits of CyraCom

### Choosing CyraCom

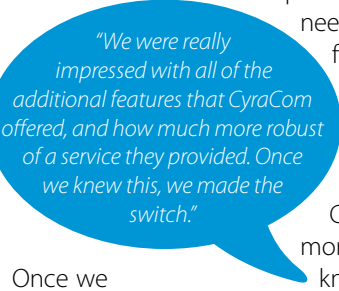
Although Palomar Health has been providing language services for many years, they didn't always use CyraCom. As their need for Phone Interpretation grew, they realized that they

needed stronger service and more features that their previous provider just did not offer. Once they found CyraCom, their search was over. "We were really impressed with all of the additional features that CyraCom offered, and how much more robust of a service they provided. Once we knew this, we made the switch," said Molinoski.

What features are they referring to?

### Auto-Authentication

According to Molinoski, the set up and integration of the auto-authentication feature was one of Palomar Health and CyraCom's



*The set up and integration of the auto-authentication feature was one of Palomar Health and CyraCom's biggest accomplishments.*

the barriers of connection, making interpreters very easy to reach.

biggest accomplishments. "This allowed us to set up quick access to CyraCom through not only the Blue Phone, but by connecting CyraCom service to each staff member's handset that they carry around." With this step, Palomar Health has effectively removed one of connection, making interpreters very

easy to reach. Language Services has been a key part of it," says Molinoski. "We wanted to provide these resources for the patient for their benefit so that they can receive the best care possible."

One example of this culture is shown in the design of meal system. At Palomar, patients can select their meals from a menu, call down to the Dining department, and place their meal order like they would room service at a hotel. Aside from this entire idea being put into place to make the patients feel more comfortable, with CyraCom service, the food ordering process is seamless even in languages other than English. This is just another way that Palomar Health serves all of their patients.

This is also shown through the inclusion of language service to the Perinatology department. Quality care in this department requires several home calls to convey information. Before CyraCom, calls to non-English speakers were restricted to bilingual staff, meaning that patients could not talk to their usual doctor. Since Palomar Health began using phone interpretation in this department, now all of their staff members are able to make home calls to gather information and answer patient questions. The result is better care for all their patients.

Here are some additional examples of how Palomar Health ensures consistent quality of service for their limited English patients:

### Tracking Language Preference

With their new Electronic Health Records software, language preference gets captured before each appointment. The software also allows Palomar Health to track and analyze language usage information later.

### Use of Technology

All staff members have Cisco integrated handsets on them at all times. This means that anywhere in the facility, they can dial their extension to get connected to staff or phone interpreters.

*"We've really tried to develop the focus of a patient-centered culture here. Language Services has been a key part of it."*

### Dedicated Account Management Team

Palomar Health has also experienced the benefits of CyraCom's dedicated Account Management team. "Knowing that I can email and contact someone and get a response immediately is huge. If I have a question or there's something I'm not familiar with, it assures me that I can get any question addressed. I also really appreciate how proactive they are about improvement, coming to me with new ways to try things or new products or features. It's really helped us integrate the service into our facility."

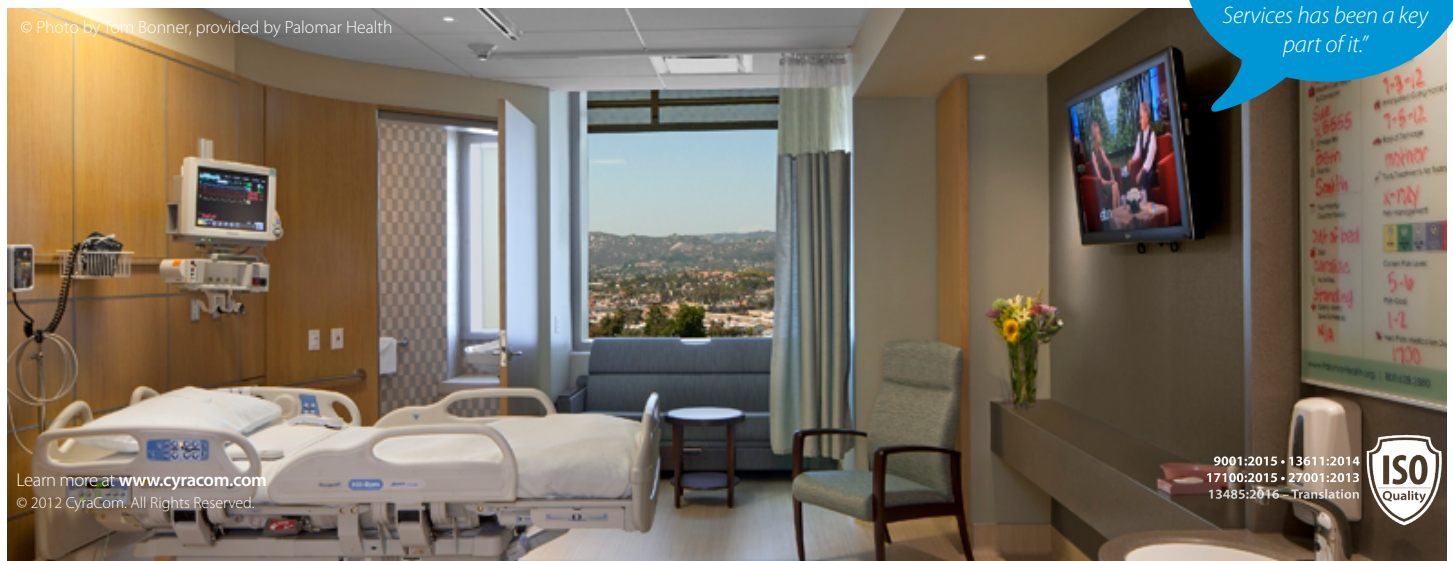
### Corded and Cordless Dual Handsets

When Palomar Health was moving into a new facility, they needed to set up a new infrastructure for providing access to language services. With the help of their CyraCom Account Manager, they ordered and placed approximately 60 Dual Handset Blue Phones, both corded and cordless, strategically around the facility. Molinoski's plan was effective: "We really tried to set it up so that wherever there was visitor contact or patient contact, there would be a Blue Phone within 100 feet of that location." In addition, they put language posters and other support materials up all over the facilities to encourage both staff and patient engagement.

### Above and Beyond

#### Patient-Centered Culture

Palomar Health has not only been recognized as a remarkable and successful health organization, they have also been recognized for creating a dedicated, patient-focused atmosphere. "We've really



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## Joint Commission Reviews

When Palomar opened their new facility in 2012, they passed the language services portion of their Joint Commission review with flying colors. This is due, in part, to Molinoski's thorough review and execution of Joint Commission standards. To follow these standards, Palomar Health tests the skills of interpreters each year as part of their annual interpreter competency evaluation.

## Support from Hospital Executives

According to Molinoski, it's extremely helpful to have a supportive executive staff when it comes to language services.

"They really understand the importance of utilization of interpreters. We are very supported in getting the resources we need to better serve patients."

## Communication of Language Services to Physicians

"Whenever physicians are brought on board, we have a training module that covers how they can access our language services programs. In addition, we're constantly reminding them of the benefits of using our interpreters through continuing education sessions."



## Future Plans

Although Palomar Health serves their patients in many ways, they are looking to accomplish more in the future. One plan, currently in development, involves setting up a process in their Learning Management Software to track proof of interpreter qualification, building an automatic notification system for the yearly re-assessment of staff interpreters. This way they can always stay on top of Joint Commission requirements and minimize risk by making sure interpreters are current and qualified.

Overall, Palomar Health has done an excellent job of creating a patient-centered culture and will continue to do so in the future. "We are really pleased with what we've been able to do here for our patients, and language services plays a key role in that culture."

Joe Molinoski is the Supervisor for Pipeline Career Services at Palomar Health. He collaborates with HR to oversee the entire organization's language services program, which includes the CyraCom service, staff interpreters, and the Pathmaker Medical Interpreter program. He is also responsible for review and execution of the Joint Commission Standards.

## About CyraCom

In business for 25 years, CyraCom is a language services leader that provides interpretation and translation services to thousands of organizations across the US and worldwide.

Providing the best language services is a complex formula, and CyraCom considers every piece of the equation: quality, availability, security, speed and accessibility, and client support.

## Contact CyraCom

Contact CyraCom today to discuss how we can improve your language services program.

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