

# Doctor: Patients need interpreters

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A new study finds that millions of U.S. residents with limited English skills are at risk when they go to a hospital or a doctor's office.

Dr. Glenn Flores of the Center for the Advancement of Underserved Children in Milwaukee looked at a number of studies as well as statistical data for his report in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

He detailed incidents where patients endured hardships because of language difficulties. One example was a Spanish-speaking woman who lost custody of her children when a resident in a hospital emergency room thought she was admitting hitting her daughter -- when she said, in Spanish, that the 2-year-old had fallen off her tricycle and hit herself.

While 8.4 percent of U.S. residents have limited English skills, one study found that interpreters are available in fewer than half the cases in which they visit emergency rooms. Only 23 percent of teaching hospitals train medical students on working with interpreters.

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