

NEWS RELEASE

San Francisco –*February 9, 2007* – The Medical Leadership Council on Cultural Proficiency has unveiled a first-of-its-kind database designed to assist physicians and others in providing improved language access and culturally competent health care.

With more than 350 initial entries, the searchable, internet-based, free-to-the-public database includes contact information for interpreters, nonprofit organizations, hospitals, public health departments and others that provide health information and services in languages other than English. Users, including physicians, nurses, social service workers, patients and the general public, can search for listings by county, by language, or by type of service.

“Forty percent of California’s 34 million residents speak a language other than English at home,” said Len Fromer, MD, a co-convenor of the council and past president of the 7,000-member California Academy of Family Physicians (CAFP), the lead administrative organization for the Medical Leadership Council, and developers of the database. “For 26 percent of Californians, that language is Spanish. Numerous academic studies have shown that patients’ health is at risk when appropriate language access is not provided in health care. If a patient doesn’t understand his or her diagnosis, the directions for care, or how to take medications, care can be seriously compromised. We support the use of an interpreter whenever needed, and we believe this database is a great first step.”

The Medical Leadership Council on Cultural Proficiency is a statewide organization of physician and medical society leaders, health systems representatives, and advocates convened by The California Endowment to improve language access, workforce diversity, and cultural proficiency in health care.

“This database is a significant step toward providing better healthcare for the millions of people in California who speak primary languages other than English and who need interpreters and culturally appropriate health education materials as part of their primary health care,” said Robert K. Ross, President and CEO of The California Endowment, which funded creation of the database.

“We want to help physicians and patients access the wealth of resources available,” explained Dr. Fromer. “A first step in providing language access and culturally competent care is knowing what’s available. This internet site helps users quickly find interpreters, materials about how to provide culturally competent care, information in several languages about specific diseases and healthy practices, and county-specific contacts to find further assistance.”

For example, a physician in Fresno County looking for assistance for a patient who speaks Hmong and has just been diagnosed with cancer can search the database to locate resources in just minutes. Search results include statewide companies that provide interpreters; county-specific organizations that provide materials and in-person

assistance; and national organizations offering free materials for downloading and printing.

Services and materials address topics including parenting skills, adolescent health, senior services, drug and alcohol abuse counseling, domestic violence, a wide range of cancer diagnoses, nutrition, diabetes, Alzheimer's Disease and more, in languages ranging from Arabic to Vietnamese. Spanish-language materials are the most common.

Medical Leadership Council representatives say the internet site - http://medicalleadership.org/resource_interpreter.aspx - is designed to be an interactive gateway to national and local resources. They encourage other organizations and companies to submit their information to the California Academy of Family Physicians so the database can grow as a centralized, comprehensive resource for users throughout California and beyond.

To access the database, go to <http://medicalleadership.org>, and click on "Language Access Resources." Database additions and updates may be sent to srodrigues@medicalleadership.org.

Since 1948, CAFP has been analyzing and disseminating trends and information to assist California's family physicians in their practices. With nearly 7,000 members, including active practicing family physicians, residents in family medicine, and medical students interested in the specialty, CAFP is the largest primary care medical society in California, and the largest chapter of the American Academy of Family Physicians. Family physicians are trained to treat an entire family's medical needs, addressing the whole spectrum of life's medical challenges. FPs serve a broad base of patients in urban, suburban and rural areas, often in California's most underserved areas.

The California Endowment was established in 1996 to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians. The Endowment has regional offices in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento, Fresno and San Diego with program staff working throughout the state. The Endowment makes grants to organizations and institutions that directly benefit the health and well-being of the people of California. For more information, visit their Web site at www.calendow.org.