

Caduceus



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LETTER FROM OUR
ADMINISTRATOR**Dear Medical Division Members,**

We are proud to present you the Spring Edition of Caduceus prepared by our new Editor, **Silvia Villacampa**, and her team. We are so excited and look forward to seeing new ideas and a fresh vision to improve Medical Division (MD) publications. An extra pair of hands is on board at the Caduceus desk. Please continue to send your articles and writings to caduceusnewsletter@ata-md.org or any questions or suggestions to divisionMD@atanet.org and we will be happy to share it with your colleagues. You can also email us and volunteer to join the Caduceus Editorial team, we always welcome new editors. Medical interpreters are welcome to write for the "Interpreter's Corner" column in our newsletter.

I encourage you all to check the updated **Resources** page on our website for some great medical resources. These sites will be extremely helpful if you are planning to take the test for the new CCHI **CoreCHI-P™** credential (for interpreters of all languages), test for **CHI™** that is available in Spanish, Arabic, and Mandarin, or if you are studying and getting prepared for any other test or project. Updates to the Resources section of the ATA Medical Division web site are the work of the new MD Leadership Council member **Sara Greenlee**, the MD Admin and our beloved webmaster, **Mery Molenaar**. I would appreciate it if you would email your suggestions for the Resources section to any of our [Leadership Council members](#). If you discover new resources through webinars or conferences that you attend, you can share it with Sara or me.

As I promised you in my notes from the last edition of Caduceus, we have new activities for MD members in 2023. A series of free presentations on topics useful to both medical translators and interpreters started with the first presentation by Nora Diaz on February 7th, "Windows 11, Tips and Tricks." Presentations will continue throughout the year. If you would like to offer a



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presentation for your colleagues, email me. The first presentation was recorded, and access was given for a limited time to only those who registered for the event. Therefore, if you attend the presentations, you can re-watch and review them and have access for a few weeks after the presentation. Generally, the ATA does not allow us to record presentations and save them, so we may have to use a different platform with the presenter's consent. The recording policy may change if we face other problems. Nonetheless, I hope that you register and attend these live events, but we will do anything we can to give access to our members who are interested.

In addition to the presentation series, we are going to continue to host networking events. We are adding a series of joint networking events where we join with other ATA divisions and help our members to extend their connections network. The first one of these in the series was a Medical Division and Interpreters Division (ID) networking event on April 26th. There are more of these networking events to come, and we are planning to partner with ID again in a few months. So if you missed this one there will be another chance. Join us to hear from your colleagues around the globe, talk about the latest news in translation, meet new friends and explore new options for your career.

As you may have noticed, we have a new social media moderator on board, **Antoni Maroto**. He has been doing a great job updating our social media regularly. Check our website <https://ata-md.org> for the links. If you wish to volunteer and join our great leadership team email me at divisionMD@atanet.org. There are several openings, we are looking for volunteers to join our podcast team, and hopefully start it soon. If you have your own podcast or any experience in this regard, I would love to talk to you and hear your suggestions.

Regarding the Annual Conference ATA64, there is plenty of exciting news that I am not allowed to share with you yet, but I am not sure how much longer I can keep the news to myself—I am beyond excited. I would like to finish by wishing you a lovely spring, full of joy and success. Stay in touch.

Yasha Saebi





Dr. Beverley Costa is a psychotherapist and a Senior Practitioner Fellow at Birkbeck, University of London, and a Senior Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Reading, UK. She set up Mothertongue multi-ethnic counseling service (2000-2018) and in 2009 she created a pool of mental health interpreters and founded The Pásalo Project in 2017 to disseminate learning from

Mothertongue. Her book Other Tongues - psychological therapies in a multilingual world was published in 2020. In 2021/22 she created the online training resource on mental health and multilingualism (hosted on the Pásalo website), with funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and The National Lottery. You can contact her at:

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**AN INTRA-
PROFESSIONAL
APPROACH TO
DEALING WITH
OCCUPATIONAL
STRESS FOR
INTERPRETERS**

SUPPORT NEEDS OF INTERPRETERS

“You can get home and it (the interpreting assignment) can impact on the relationship you have with friends and family. Because if you don’t offload here (in the reflective practice support group) it’s going to come out. And sometimes in the wrong situations.”

(Interpreter working for Mothertongue multi-ethnic counseling service (2000-2018))^[1]

If you work in highly sensitive settings in health and care contexts, the above experience may seem very familiar to you. You may recognize how the effort of squashing down your feelings in one moment can lead to them bursting out somewhere else. And it can happen when we least expect it, causing damage, not only to ourselves, but also to those around us. But what if you were supported enough so that you didn’t get to the bursting point? And what if you could learn how to share that kind of support with your colleagues who are already at the bursting point?

This article looks at why support is needed for interpreters who work in the public service context. It then reviews what support is available. (That won’t take long!) It goes on to introduce an intervention to train interpreters to become *interpreter-facilitators* of reflective practice support

¹ Although I am writing from the context of the UK, the principles of the intervention I describe are universal.

Reflective supervision is also referred to in this article as reflective practice/support. I prefer to use this term rather than supervision to avoid confusion with the management function or in-depth clinical focus of supervision

groups. Trained *interpreter-facilitators* can provide appropriate support, from within the profession intra-professionally, colleague to colleague(s).

Why is Support for Interpreters Needed?

Interpreters hear and render distressing messages. Being involved in emotionally charged assignments can have a detrimental effect on any helpers' physical as well as emotional wellbeing if not dealt with appropriately. Rendering highly emotional messages in first person (as interpreters are frequently asked to do) tends to exacerbate the detrimental impact. Empathic engagement itself may cause helpers to burn out and to experience vicarious trauma (Harvey, 2003; Rothschild, 2007). As the interpreter quoted at the beginning of this section described so clearly, the incremental effect of emotions being lodged and left unprocessed can have repercussions over days, weeks, and even years: *"...and sometimes in the wrong situations."*

Because of this, personal therapy and counseling are often recommended for interpreters as a form of self-care. That can of course be helpful for some people. But for others accessing occupational support to deal with occupational stress may be a more appropriate form of self-care. Professions that work in ethically and emotionally demanding contexts, like nursing (Li et al. 2014), psychological therapies and social work, have developed occupational support structures (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012) for their workers such as reflective supervision.^[1]

The professional codes of conduct for health and social care workers require practitioners to make regular use of supervision/support when it is offered (Carroll, 2007), in order to maintain their fitness to practice.

What is reflective practice support?

Self-care is regarded as a core part of the process for developing one's self-respect at the personal and professional level (BACP, 2018). It is also an integral component of reflective practice support. Reflective practice support can occur at the one-to-one level or it can be delivered in groups. It enables practitioners to recharge their emotional batteries, to reduce or prevent occupational stress and burn out and to maintain the standard of their work. Although there is no set agenda the following example illustrates the activities, from Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1998), that may occur in a reflective practice support group session. A participant who shares (or a "sharer") may describe an event or an experience and the associated feelings. Reflecting on and evaluating the experience may then lead to a greater understanding and an action plan for the future. Reflecting in a group means that the sharer is not alone. They are supported by the other members of the group who contribute their own associations, experiences and tips. From the collective sharing new meanings can emerge. Reflective practice support also helps with managing role boundaries, and it includes an element of accountability by exploring and maintaining ethical practice. It completes the circle of care – the supporter is supported.

Although the support needs of interpreters have been regularly discussed and researched (Korpál & Mellinger, 2022) for several years, there are few examples in practice of effective and affordable support interventions. Where they do occur the support intervention tends to be facilitated by psychological therapists.



Inter-Practitioner Support

In the UK, there are some isolated examples of support provided by psychological therapists to interpreters working in refugee support NGOs. This is a form of inter-professional support - *by* psychological therapists *to* interpreters. Some interpreters may appreciate the opportunity to participate in support groups facilitated by clinicians. There is also an argument that psychological clinicians are well suited to run reflective groups because of the high level of skill required. However, interpreters, who have participated in groups facilitated by clinicians with little or no experience and training in working with interpreters can find the experience frustrating. Besides, designating the position of facilitator of interpreters support interventions to clinicians creates an asymmetrical power dynamic and hierarchical structure.

Intra-Practitioner Support - *interpreter-facilitators*

One way of addressing these power issues is to create the new role of *interpreter-facilitators* of reflective support groups. In this way *interpreter-facilitators* become the intra-practitioner facilitators of reflective supervision/support for their peers. Intra-practitioner support empowers interpreters to become active agents in their own support and self-care provision. Naturally, this involves training interpreters in the skills and practice of safe facilitation of reflective practice. Specific skills are

required to facilitate reflective practice in group formats for the safety and wellbeing of everyone involved. The proposed training is a brief initial intervention which is followed by ongoing supervision of interpreter-facilitators' facilitation practice.

Some of you may ask how this training compares with the in-depth training in clinical supervision that psychologists receive. Clearly it is not the same, but in-depth clinical supervision isn't always relevant for non-clinical groups. The alternative we are suggesting is reflective practice support and not clinical supervision. Although training clinical supervisors is well established, training non-clinicians to facilitate intra-practitioner reflective practice support/supervision is not without precedent in the UK (BACP, 2021).

Individual or Group Support?

Interpreters mainly work in isolation with few professional structures to glue them together as a cohesive constituency. A group format is often welcomed by interpreters as a form of community support and solidarity as well as the chance to learn from each other. Solidarity is often hard to achieve when you work as a freelancer. You are regularly in competition with others for jobs. Competitive behavior does not work in favor of collegiality (although it may benefit employers). The Health and Care Professions Council, which regulates fifteen health and care professions in the UK, believes that when reflective practice is conducted in facilitated supportive groups it builds collective wisdom through the sharing of ideas and knowledge.

Facilitating a reflective practice support group is more demanding than one-to-one or peer-to-peer support. It requires sensitivity, skills, and awareness of the ethical challenges of personal and professional development work. Although facilitating reflective practise support groups is not specifically within interpreters' skill sets, many interpreters' skills are transferable and their professional skill sets can be developed and expanded with appropriate training.

A training initiative for *interpreter-facilitators* of reflective practice support groups

A brief training intervention to train *interpreter-facilitators* was piloted between 2019 and 2022 by The Pásalo Project www.pasaloproject.org. The training model focused on group rather than individual peer-to peer supervision.

Interpreters' time is precious, and it was understood that the training needed to be brief but intensive, free of charge or at an affordable cost. The pilot training was evaluated by twelve participating, qualified and experienced interpreters (ten with over 15 years of experience). The two most important outcomes identified were: learning about psychological safety; learning how to listen and to allow space for others to comment. Eight of the participants rated the course as highly effective in building their confidence to become an *interpreter-facilitator* of reflective practice/supervision groups.

The training program focused on equipping *interpreter-facilitators* to create an ethically and psychologically safe space so that participants could feel safe to share their concerns and dilemmas, so they could think together as a group about what could be shared, what could be learned and ultimately, so that they could improve their practice. Facilitators were trained to know their limits

and to be clear about when they needed to suggest that a participant might want to access further support beyond the support provided by the group.

Method

Because many interpreters have seldom had experience of participating in pastoral, or reflective practice groups, the training pilot was highly immersive and experiential too. This is why a model of training called an apprenticeship/learning-by-doing model was used. As an approach it dismantles and makes visible participants' "knowing-in- action" (Schön,1983). The active learning approach builds on practitioners' skills and encourages them to put their adapted skills into practice from day one of the training, with practical homework tasks between sessions and four follow-up, supervised practice sessions after the three-day training program has been completed (Costa, 2023).

Preparation

As part of the immersion, all the trainees took part, as active participants, in reflective practice support group sessions facilitated by the trainer. After each session, everyone – participants and trainer - deconstructed and discussed the process of the group facilitation which the trainer had modeled. Participants appreciated that the facilitator understood that although the kind of material they brought to the reflective group might overlap with healthcare practitioners' issues and concerns, there were substantial differences. Here are some amalgamated and anonymized issues that interpreters brought to the pilot training groups:

- *I had to interpret for a 14-year-old girl. She is pregnant because she was raped by the agent who brought her here. I can't stop thinking about her.*
- *I interpreted for a teenage boy who kept shouting and saying he was going to kill himself. I don't know what happened to him. I am not sure if he is alive.*
- *The therapist refused to give me a briefing meeting.*
- *I was interpreting for a client who says he hates all Africans. But I am African. What should I do when a client is prejudiced or is acting in a discriminatory way? It affects me.*

Reflective, Learning-By-Doing

The competencies and skills that a facilitator of a reflective practice support group for interpreters needs to develop are drawn out, using a learning-by-doing approach, from participation in the group and the post-participation discussions about the process. The trainer is questioned about their rationale for decisions they made when they were facilitating the group sessions.

The following is a brief list of some of the issues addressed and the questions asked during the training pilots:

- What happens if someone in the group acts disrespectfully towards another member of the group?
- What do I do if a member of the group gets triggered by the discussion?
- How do I encourage quiet people to participate?
- How do I manage people who dominate the conversation?

- What is my responsibility for creating a psychologically safe environment?
- How do I stop people giving unwanted advice?
- How do I get people to listen to each other?
- Why are you so strict with us about the time?
- How do I keep control of the time when some people are talking for a long time?

The learning-by-doing approach requires that, if any essential skills and competencies have not been addressed in the discussion phase, the trainer completes any gaps in the observations to ensure that all the competencies and skills needed to facilitate a reflective practice support group for interpreters are covered. These competencies and skills include: learning how to create a psychologically safe space; contracting; encouraging discussion of ethical issues; containing participants' anxiety and fear of being judged; communicating and intervening appropriately; engaging, modeling and encouraging intelligent empathy; navigating appropriately the "support – challenge" continuum; facilitating conversations about difficult issues; giving and receiving feedback appropriately; pre-empting, identifying and managing possible triggers for participants; facilitating the cycle of experiencing/learning/applying to practice: referring appropriately to the interpreters' codes of conduct.

During the three days of training participants practiced peer support and they practiced facilitating a reflective support group for interpreters. At the end of the three-day course participants organized four practice group sessions so that they could continue to practice running groups without the trainer present. After each of the four practice groups the trainer provided group supervision for the facilitator(s) of the groups. The training provided a comprehensive practical introduction to reflective facilitation skills, which was further embedded by ongoing supervision of facilitation practice.

Post-Training Examples of Practice

Already mentioned are the results from the post training evaluation where eight of the participants rated the course as highly effective in building their confidence to become an *interpreter-facilitator*. This level of confidence is evident in the practical outputs from the pilot training interventions. A number of new groups, facilitated by the newly trained *interpreter-facilitators* have been established. Here are two examples.

- Two interpreting organizations have set up reflective practice support groups for new and inexperienced interpreters who have been recruited quickly, with little time for induction as a result of the large numbers of Ukrainian refugees from the war in Ukraine settling in Scotland and Wales. The sudden events of war and other catastrophes can mean that interpreters have to be recruited and trained very quickly. These reflective practice support groups are facilitated by two of the "graduates" from the *interpreter-facilitator* training programs.
- A successful funding bid has enabled an *interpreter-facilitator* (a "graduate" from another training cohort) to be employed to run a reflective practice support group for interpreters who work with people held in immigration detention centers and with victims of trafficking.

Closing Thoughts

The cumulative nature of emotional demands on supportive practitioners such as interpreters in health and social care and their need for appropriate support have been well documented. Facilitated support can breathe life back into a deflated interpreter. Like all helpers, interpreters appreciate receiving as well as giving support so that they can maintain their compassionate and highly skilled practice. By training *interpreter-facilitators* to provide this support themselves, at the intra-professional level, a self-sustaining circle of support is created, the supporter is supported. *within* the profession, colleague to colleague(s).

What might it mean for the interpreter we heard from at the beginning of this article if interpreters could support each other in this way? Well, it might mean that her occupational stress becomes manageable, those pent-up feelings from an interpreting assignment don't end up bursting out in the wrong situations and she might find she wants to learn how to pass this support on to others. It's a domino effect of support and solidarity. It just takes one domino to have an effect. What are you waiting for?

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BIG BENEFITS FOR YOUR CAREER AND WHY YOU SHOULD LEARN ABOUT PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS FOR LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS

As a language interpreter or translator, or both, you know that the work that you do is important and meaningful. You make it possible for people to communicate across language barriers, likely making a

profound impact on the lives of people. To further support your journey as a language professional, have you considered learning about the many different professional associations just for you?

Noticed that I did not even say you have to join. There is tremendous benefit in either joining or simply checking out what language interpreter and translator associations have to offer. Many times, you are not required to become a member to attend programs. Frequently, these associations offer free and low-cost meetings, workshops and events. The workshops can be a source of continuing education units (CEUs) if you are a certified interpreter or translator. Attending events and meetings is a great way to stay up-to-date on the latest trends in the field and improve your skills.

Other ways to support your professional development are to serve on a committee or become part of the board of directors. You may want to aspire to present a workshop at a conference.

One of the biggest benefits of becoming part of a professional association is the opportunity to network with other language professionals. This can be a great way to learn about new opportunities, share ideas, and get support from your colleagues.

I will highlight the best experiences I have had so far.



Silvia Villacampa has worked in language services since 2010, when she began her career as a freelance medical interpreter. Prior to that, she worked for 20 years in bilingual English/Spanish positions for federal, state, and county government programs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she held a four-month temporary position as a COVID Case Investigator with Arlington County, Virginia.

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National Language Service Corps (NLSC) <https://nlscorps.org/>

I will start by highlighting a professional organization that **is free to join** and offers benefits such as free language testing. NLCS offers free OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview) and DLPT (Defense Language Proficiency Test). I have been a member of the NLCS, Mid-Atlantic Region since 2011. The NLSC is a congressionally authorized program of the U.S. Department of Defense that provides language and cultural support to U.S. government agencies. Members are highly skilled language professionals who connect, share, and grow through networking, training, and testing opportunities.

[To become a member of the NLSC](#), you must apply and meet the criteria and requirements. Once you are a member, you will be assigned to a region. These regional groups meet in person or online. During the NLSC general meetings and regional meetings, you will meet other professionals with various backgrounds as language professionals. These networking and meeting events have been some of the most memorable for me in terms of the information offered and the people that I have met. The NLSC members website offers many language resources, and preparation materials for language testing. If qualified, you will have the opportunity to be selected for missions and can even be “federalized” as a special federal government employee. There are endless opportunities and resources with this organization.

ATA Chapters

Seek out a chapter of the [ATA \(American Translators Association\)](#) where you live, or in a nearby state. I have been both an individual and corporate member of [NCATA, which is the National Capital Area](#) chapter of the American Translators Association (NCATA), based in Washington, D.C., that has members from D.C., Virginia and Maryland.

NCATA’s presentation and speakers are always top notch and have included leaders and long-time professionals from the local area. This association has provided great in-person pre-pandemic events, such as their summer luncheon. Starting in 2023, in-person events have come to life again. They have always provided great networking and a chance to meet fascinating people. I once met the translator of the Catholic organization *The Sisters of Mercy* at the Washington, D.C. office –at one of the summer luncheons. During the first year of the COVID pandemic, NCATA invited me to co-host a presentation which provided me with a public speaking opportunity. Recently, NCATA hosted the ATA certification exam in Washington, D.C. Follow them on [Facebook](#) for their most up-to-date information or join their email list.

UMTIA

The company I work for happens to be a member of the [Upper Midwest Translators and Interpreters Association \(UMTIA\)](#) since we have an office in South Dakota. I learned about this association at a conference and attended a great Saturday workshop on the topic of LGBTQ topics

and pediatric patient settings. UMTIA regularly hosts various types of events, educational webinars, support group meetings for interpreters, and more recently, an in-person interpreter happy hour in Minneapolis.

AAITE and NAETISL

[AAITE \(American Association of Interpreters and Translators in Education\)](#) is a new and exciting association created with a focus on interpreting in school and educational settings. They host professional development workshops that are great for learning about resources and keeping us in the loop about this area of interpreting which is increasingly being recognized as a specialization.

With a focus on school interpreting, there is also the National Association of Educational Translators and Interpreters of Spoken Languages (NAETISL) <https://naetisl.org/>. They have workshops, an annual conference, and have already developed a [Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Educational Interpreters of Spoken Languages](#).

ATA (American Translators Association)

Last, but certainly not least is the American Translators Association (ATA). One of their largest divisions and groups of members make up the Interpreters Division. They have an amazing web site full of resources and a whole Career and Education section devoted to launching your career as a translator or growing your career as either a translator or interpreter. As part of your membership, you can select to be part of Divisions, including language-specific ones. The ATA truly desires to support the professional development of translators and interpreters. In fact, the Interpreters Division is one of the largest divisions with thousands of members. There is also the Medical Division where one can find interpreters and translators specializing in medicine, healthcare, and related fields. ATA also offers free webinars. As a member, you can join these various Divisions such as the Government Division, Language Technology Division, or a language division, such as the Chinese, Dutch, Japanese, or Portuguese divisions, to name a few. At each year's annual ATA conference, most divisions have own gathering, dinner, or networking events. The best source of membership information is the ATA Member Center at <https://www.atanet.org/member-center/>.

There are many professional associations for language interpreters and translators. To find an association that is right for you, besides the ones mentioned, you can do a quick online search. Once you have found a few associations that you are interested in, you can visit their websites to learn more about their events, programs, membership requirements and benefits.

I encourage you to take the next steps to learn about these associations today. Try them out, and see if they are worthwhile to you. The benefits of membership are many, and they can be instrumental for your career success. You may even decide to make the investment in yourself and join through a paid membership.

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with a focus on subtitling. Paula holds a Bachelor's Degree in English-Spanish Translation and a Master's Degree in Audiovisual Translation: Localization, Subtitling and Dubbing. She is originally from Argentina but she lives

in Uruguay, where she founded her translation business. Paula is the ambassador for LocLunch Montevideo and one of the organizers of the Uruguayan Translation and Interpretation Conference (Congreso Uruguayo de Traducción e Interpretación). Currently, Paula serves as the Assistant Administrator of ATA's Medical Division. In her free time, she shares resources for translators on her blog and social media.

4

MY EXPERIENCE ATTENDING THE VII CONGRESO LATINOAMERICANO DE TRADUCCIÓN E INTERPRETACIÓN

April 20-23, 2023, the VII Congreso Latinoamericano de Traducción e Interpretación took place in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This conference, organized by the Colegio de Traductores Públicos de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, provided an excellent opportunity to learn, network, and meet other professionals in the industry.

During my time at the conference, I was able to reconnect with old colleagues and meet new ones in person, which can be an enriching experience that fosters professional relationships and opens up new opportunities for collaboration. Additionally, attending conference sessions allowed me to learn about the latest trends, best practices, and technologies in the translation industry, specifically in the medical field.



As a Spanish translator specializing in health insurance, I especially enjoyed medical-related sessions, such as the ones taught by Dr. Fernando Navarro. Mr. Navarro gave two sessions, and in one of them, which was about specializing as a medical translator, he included the ATA Medical Division as a resource for medical translators and interpreters.



Photos by María Paula Plazas, used with permission of those included

Overall, attending the VII Congreso Latinoamericano de Traducción e Interpretación was a fantastic experience that allowed me to network and learn. Sharing lunch, dinner, and cultural activities with old and new colleagues was definitely my favorite part during my time in Buenos Aires.

I encourage other translators to attend similar events to continue their professional development, connect with peers, and stay up to date on industry developments.



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