



Because clear communication saves lives.

Pharmacists regularly support patients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. But when language barriers exist, patients may struggle to understand their medicines, putting their health at risk. TIS National delivers the Free Interpreting Service (FIS) program and here's why using this service is essential:

1. Protect patient safety

Miscommunication about medicines can lead to serious harm—including incorrect dosing, missed side effects, or poor adherence. Professional interpreters help ensure patients understand what their medicine is for, how to take it, and what to watch out for. They also enable patients to ask questions in their preferred language, supporting two-way communication. This helps prevent avoidable errors and improves the safety of every interaction.

2. Respect patient privacy and empower patients

Health information is deeply personal, and patients may not feel comfortable discussing sensitive topics with family or friends. Professional interpreters maintain confidentiality and create a safe space for open, honest conversations. This empowers patients to take an active role in their care—asking questions, expressing concerns, and making informed decisions. It also reinforces trust between the pharmacist and the patient.

3. Meet legal and professional obligations

Using accredited interpreters is a legal, ethical, and professional obligation. The AHPRA Code of Conduct requires pharmacists to meet the language, cultural, and communication needs of patients, including through interpreting services. This is especially important when obtaining informed consent, which must be based on clear understanding. Relying on untrained individuals can breach privacy, compromise safety, and expose practitioners to legal risk.

TIS National appoints interpreters holding National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) credentials who follow an AUSIT Code of Ethics.

4. Improve health outcomes

When patients understand their treatment, they're more likely to follow instructions correctly and adhere to their medication regimen. This leads to better health outcomes, fewer complications, and reduced hospital visits. Interpreters help bridge communication gaps that can otherwise result in confusion or non-compliance. Supporting understanding is key to long-term patient wellbeing.

5. It's fast, free, and always available

TIS National provides access to over 2,700 interpreters in 150+ languages, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Pharmacies receive priority access, making it easy to connect with interpreters quickly when needed. The service is free for eligible pharmacies and confidential for patients. It's a simple way to improve care without adding cost or complexity.

Getting started with Free Interpreting Service is easy

1. Register your pharmacy or yourself

If you're a community pharmacist or credentialed pharmacist conducting home medication reviews (HMRs), you can register for the FIS to gain free access to TIS National services. Visit tisonline.tisnational.gov.au/registeragency. Once registered, you'll receive a TIS client code—keep it handy near the phone. You'll need this code each time you request an interpreter.

2. Review your policies

Ensure your pharmacy's policies support the use of professional interpreters. Update any cultural awareness or health information policies to reflect this, and discourage the use of family or friends. Consider adding interpreter alerts to patient files in your dispensing software to prompt staff during consultations.

3. Make it routine to offer an interpreter

Patients may not ask – but you can. Try:

- *"Would you like an interpreter?"*
- *"We have a free interpreter service – would you like me to call one now?"*
- *"Would you like to speak to the pharmacist about your medicine with an interpreter?"*

4. Importantly, let them know it's free and confidential

Place signage at your consulting counter or private room to let patients know interpreters are available and free. This simple step can help normalise interpreter use and encourage patients to speak up.

How to call an interpreter

Step 1



Have ready your client code, requested language and preferred gender of the interpreter (if required).

Step 2



Call the Pharmacists' Priority Line on
1300 131 450

Step 3



Provide the operator with the language and gender (if specified) that you require.

Step 4



Provide your client code and the name of your pharmacy to the operator.

**TIS Pharmacy Priority Line | 24/7 | 150+ Languages |
Free & Confidential | 1300 131 450**

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