

TICA TERP TIPS

CHIA Conference 2022 Presentation Notes

By *Marisa Rueda Will*, CHI – ticatrainingandtranslations.com

Session Recap:

Flip the RX for Interpreting Medications

By Tatiana González-Cestari, PhD

How to Interpret Medication Names

When I was studying to take the CCHI certification exam, I contacted CCHI for advice on interpreting medications. They said to research it and talk to my department trainer. Well, we didn't have a trainer. Thank goodness for Tatiana and her experience as a pharmacist and interpreter to set the record straight. Here is her expert advice:

Brand Names Are Universal

A big part of Tatiana's talk centered around medication names. She explained that every medication has three names: the brand name, generic name, and chemical name. Brand names tend to be catchier and don't change in other languages i.e. they are NOT translated. Generic names are another story. Chemical names are the scientific name based on the compound's chemical structure.

Q: How does an interpreter tell the difference between a brand name and generic name?

A: Brand names are capitalized and may have a trademark. Generic names should not be capitalized. Generic names are translated and will change in other languages.

Q: What are some reliable websites for researching medications?

A: Tatiana suggests the following websites for researching medication names: [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org), [Medline Plus](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/), [Google](https://www.google.com), [Drugs.com](https://www.drugs.com), and [Vademecum](https://www.vademecum.com) (Spanish)

How to Translate Medications

1. Recognize Brand Names

As Tatiana mentioned, brand names are not interpreted. Learn common brand names and memorize them (e.g. Tylenol, Advil, Motrin). Check the [FDA's Medication Guide](#) to easily look up the names of medications in English.

2. Check the Spelling

Ask the patient or provider to spell the name of an unfamiliar medication to ensure you get it right. Tatiana warned interpreters to check the spelling with a patient or provider when in doubt. If you assume you know which medication the patient is referencing, you could be wrong. Avoid mistranslations by mediating when necessary. It's ok and it's a necessary part of our job!

“Be assertive and ask providers to spell the names of unfamiliar medications.”

- Tatiana González-Cestari, PhD

How Should Generic Medication Names Be Translated?

To download an extensive chart with prefixes, roots, and suffixes of common medications in English and Spanish check out the free Medications PDF I created. You may be surprised how some medication names change between the two languages.

