

Use of machine translation in health care settings



RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the use of translation apps and websites in state funded health care services in NSW?

ISSUES

- Use of translation apps and websites, such as Google Translate, seems to be increasing
- Translation apps may not be accurate for health information and accuracy varies between languages

CONTEXT

- Most research has focused on their development and accuracy of translation apps, but little research on use in health care
- Updated NSW Health Policy Directive in December 2017 made clear use of translation apps is not allowed

RESULTS

- 34% of survey respondents had used a translation app or website in a clinical encounter (n=516)
Of these:
 - 75% had used a translation app within the past 12 months (57% in past 3 months)
 - 67% of use of a translation app was initiated by clinicians
 - 73% had most recently used an app between 8:30am and 5pm
 - 43% used an app after a request for a professional interpreter had been made
- App users were more likely to be younger, male, and medical and nursing staff
- Apps were generally perceived to be useful, low risk, but inaccurate
- Interview participants described the use of translation apps as being consistent with patient centred care and that they weighed up the risks of inaccuracy with the benefits of timely communication.
- Use of apps appears to be increasing*
- Apps were generally perceived to be useful, low risk, but inaccurate

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*2017 survey of 698 staff in three NSW Local Health Districts/Specialty Networks on interpreter use found 18% had used a translation app

