

**QUALITY ASSURANCE IN MEDICAL TRANSLATION**  
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**Abstract:** *this article discusses medical translation quality, translator training and qualifications, translation quality management procedures, with particular focus on back-translation and parallel translation in the light of improving the quality of translation and interpreting for the medical sector. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the importance of quality in medical translation and interpreting, to present various methods of quality assurance in medical translation, to reflect on the qualifications of medical translators and to provide suggestions regarding medical translation quality assurance.*

**Keywords:** *translation, interpreting, translation errors, medical translation, quality assessment, translation review.*

**ОБЕСПЕЧЕНИЕ КАЧЕСТВА МЕДИЦИНСКОГО ПЕРЕВОДА**  
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**Аннотация:** *в данной статье обсуждается качество медицинского перевода, обучение переводчика и квалификации, процедуры управления качеством перевода, с особым акцентом на бэк-перевод и параллельного переноса в свете улучшения качества перевода и интерпретации для медицинского сектора. Целью данной статьи является обсуждение важности качества в медицинской письменного и устного перевода, чтобы представить различные методы контроля качества в области медицинского перевода, чтобы отразить на квалификации медицинских переводчиков и предоставить предложения относительно обеспечения качества медицинского перевода.*

**Ключевые слова:** *перевод, устный перевод, ошибки перевода, медицинский перевод, оценка качества, обзор перевода.*

Translation and interpreting help mediate knowledge in the world of medicine or pharmaceutical research, but are rarely the focus of healthcare researchers' attention unless a mistranslation triggers severe clinical consequences, including health or life hazard, or becomes the reason for lawsuits or financial claims. It is therefore crucial to ensure sufficient standards of quality in medical translation and interpreting. Although translation does not occupy the most central position in the world of medicine, it certainly plays an important role in knowledge mediation: sharing medical research results, publishing new findings in the international scientific community and marketing new medicinal products and medical devices are key features of this role. Apart from books, articles and presentations, translated medical texts primarily include registration documents, such as application dossiers for the registration of new medicines and medical devices, as well as instruction manuals for medical equipment and instruments, and documents for clinical trials [2]. Medical translation requires great skills, because it needs to be precise and very accurate. However, medical translation has terminologies that are unique to this field, and appears in different spellings based on the target language. Added to this is the fact that abbreviations could mean different things.

The main obstacles a medical translator is likely to face are medical terminology and medical knowledge. Medical terminology can present problems different and separate from other types of translation. It is important to emphasize that medical translation is something that should not be entrusted to someone simply because they are fluent in the languages being used. Medical translation requires training and a certain level of knowhow when it comes to medical terms, phrases, and idioms. Being fluent and well exposed to languages and the associated cultures is vital but it does not supplant the need for medical knowledge. It is easy for ordinary folks to mistake medical terms and try to present their own interpretation of symptoms, which leads to inaccurate information [4].

Medical translators who are responsible for mediating professional communication are expected to have considerable expertise in translation and in a given subject area. What is more, written materials, such as health surveys, patient consents, posters, leaflets etc. need to be made available to foreign patients whose command of a given language may be insufficient. This is frequently performed by medical translators who specialize in professional-layman communication. A separate group of facilitators is constituted by public service interpreters, who mediate communication between professionals, and also between healthcare professionals, e.g. hospital staff and patients. Therefore, medical translators and interpreters facilitate the communication process between patients and medical professionals because the failure to communicate with a patient may lead to health or life-threatening situations if a physician is unable to obtain information from a patient. [3]

A translator who embarks on the seemingly steep path of medical translation has two main obstacles: medical knowledge, and medical terminology. This post is about the latter. Medical terminology presents problems which are different from other specialized domains. This post presents the most obvious problems in determining the right medical terminology. It is not an extensive list; nevertheless, it should present a clear case for the difficulties translators encounter in translating medical texts. Though written mostly from the point-of-view of French to English translation, it can also apply to medical translation of all language pairs. Lastly, these issues can also apply to the practice of medical lexicography.

One of the first criteria that a medical translator has to determine is their target audience. The target audience will determine whether the text is translated into layperson terms or medical terms (or both). For example, “Varicelle” (FR) would not be automatically translated into “Varicella” (EN), which is the medical term for “Chickenpox”, if the text is intended for a layperson (e.g. a patient).

Eponyms present a big problem in Medical translation because often they are synonyms for another term. For example, according to *Dermatology Therapy: A-Z Essentials*, “Infantile Scurvy” has the following synonyms: “Barlow’s disease”; “Möller-Barlow disease”; “Barlow’s syndrome”; “Cheadle-Möller-Barlow syndrome”; “Moeller’s disease”; “vitamin C deficiency syndrome”. Choosing between an eponym and another term would depend on which is more common in the target culture.

If in the past medicine did not progress at the same speed as it does today, medical translation was a fairly uncomplicated task because the basic physiological and anatomical terminology was largely similar across the world [1]. The situation has changed with the advent of technological and scientific advances that the 20th century witnessed. This unprecedented desire for discovery is unlikely to come to an end soon since 702 more and more professionals become involved in scientific research to which significant amounts of funds are allotted.

To conclude, when translating in the medical field do not hesitate to seek extra help when doubts arise, as mistakes can be very costly. It is also important to get to know the type of text, whether it be an abstract for a scientific article, a pharmaceutical prescription, a patent for medication or a patient’s medical report, so the translator may structure their translation, gain insight through parallel texts and know the purpose of their work.

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