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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRONUNCIATION SCREENING RECOMMENDED FOR MEDICAL INTERPRETERS

International Medical Interpreters Association Executive Director Recommends Mandatory Pronunciation Screening For Candidates

BOSTON – The Executive Director of the International Medical Interpreters Association (IMIA) has recommended compulsory English pronunciation screening for the evaluation of medical interpreters' communication skills. Earlier this month, IMIA Executive Director Izabel S. Arocha issued a public statement stressing an urgent need for the practice. In her statement, Ms. Arocha expressed the value of the Pronunciation Screening Tool, a pronunciation testing and rating guide specifically developed for medical interpreters.

"An individual's pronunciation evaluation should be a mandatory component of language proficiency screening, especially when evaluating an applicant's potential for working as a medical interpreter," said Ms. Arocha. "I do not know of any other tool that is so comprehensive and specific to the needs of medical interpreters and other healthcare professionals than this one."

Developed by speech-language pathologists Lynda Katz Wilner and Marjorie Feinstein-Whittaker of Baltimore based ESL Rules, LLC, the Pronunciation Screening Tool helps trainers to identify common English pronunciation and stress differences in non-native English speakers. The tool utilizes healthcare related vocabulary as the basis for the test.

"The federal government mandates that healthcare organizations must provide interpretive services for limited English proficient patients," says Ms. Feinstein-Whittaker. "However, there is no established pronunciation standard for medical interpreters."

Wilner and Feinstein-Whittaker are conducting surveys of administrators and medical professionals to assess the impact of communication on healthcare when interpretive services are used. They expect the data from the surveys to show a need to consider accurate pronunciation as a competency for medical interpreters.

"Right now, fluency and command of written English satisfy the government mandate for interpreters, but without clear pronunciation, there exists a verbal communication gap that can lengthen the patient/provider encounter and contribute to medical errors," explains Ms. Wilner. "Our tool is designed to bridge that gap, shorten the duration of the patient/provider encounter, and – ultimately – make healthcare safer and more affordable."

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ESL Rules, LLC is a provider of training materials and resources for non-native English speaking professionals. Founded by licensed speech-language pathologists Lynda Katz Wilner and Marjorie Feinstein-Whittaker, ESL Rules develops books, workshops, and evaluation tools for foreign accent reduction and presentation & communication skills.

For more information, or to schedule an interview with Ms. Wilner or Ms. Feinstein-Whittaker, please call 410-356-5666.