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What scope for interpreters' ethics? The challenge of health interpreting

The mark of a profession is the ability to define the scope of its own practice, including ethical standards and practices. This paper reports on a qualitative study undertaken with health care interpreters. We compare the findings of the project and the current code of ethics with the literature which defines a 'profession' to draw out explicitly what a normative ethics could involve.

It does this cognisant of the reality of health care hierarchies and resource and time limitations which frame much of the practice of those involved in the delivery of health care services, including interpreting.

The potential impact on interpreters (individually and as a profession), patients and their families, clinicians, and health services is outlined for discussion with reference to case studies from both the participants and the literature.