# On Scene Communication challenges

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#### A little bit about me...

- Paramedic with Hennepin EMS since 2012
- Community Service Officer Paramedic with the Meeker County Sherriff Dept.
  - Approx. 25,000 people over 600 sq. miles
- Hennepin EMS is an urban/suburban service
  - Averages 85,000 +/- calls for service a year
  - Peak staffing is 25 dual paramedic ambulances

### What I aim to cover

- Overview of communication challenges faced
  - By providers
- What some of the responses to these challenges may look like in practice
- Future directions

### **Challenges with communication**



What does this mean?

### Other potential challenges with communication

Persons with sensory or intellectual disability

Persons under the influence of altering chemicals (e.g. alcohol, prescription medications, illegal drugs)

### What can poor communication lead to?

Frustration?

Anger?

Misunderstanding?

So what can we do to help?



Language barriers and disabilities that affect communication have been shown to decrease quality of care [during a hospital stay]

Impact of patient communication problems on the risk of preventable adverse events in acute care settings. Bartlett G, Blais R, Tamblyn R, Clermont RJ, MacGibbon B CMAJ. 2008 Jun 3; 178(12):1555-62.

Understand, listen, and adapt

### Remember there are always two sides to a conversation

Just because I understand what I am explaining doesn't mean you do as well

#### Two sides continued...

Provider	Patient
Personal factors such as, gender of the provider, culture, language, and age	Personal factors such as, gender of the provider, culture, language, and age
Being overworked	Feeling like there is a lack of communication
Interference from family	Anxiety or pain distracting
Environmental factors causing distraction	Environmental factors causing distraction

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4954910/

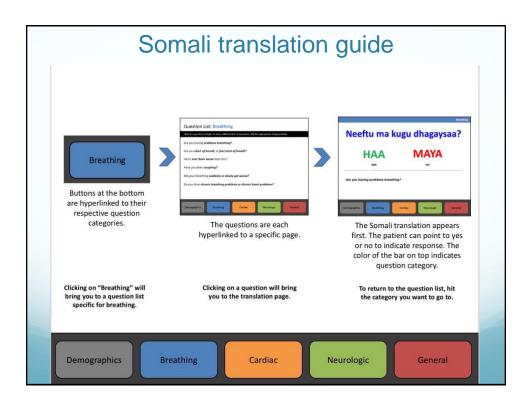
How does communication impact my work as an EMS provider?

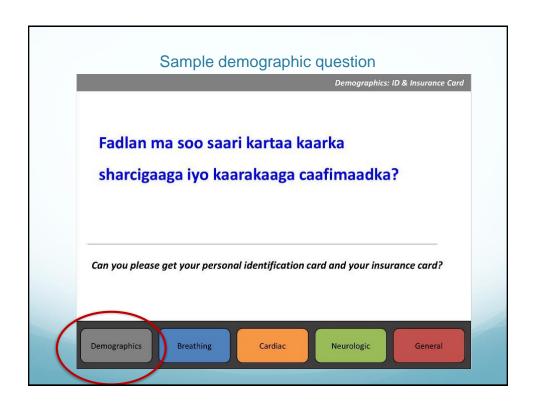
The Twin Cities is home to many different cultural groups and languages

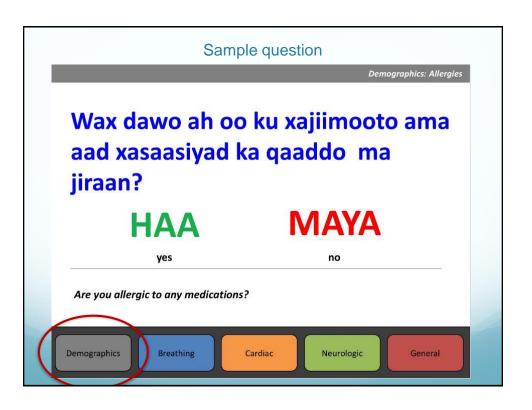
How can we bridge communication gaps where both parities don't understand each other?

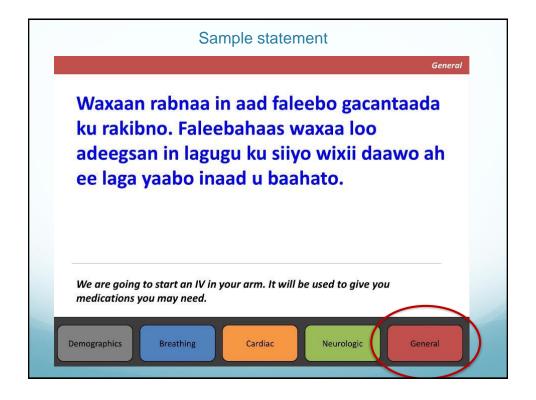
### Somali translation guide

Compiling some of the most frequently asked questions by paramedics, I worked with my department to create a guide with the focus of identifying life threatening emergencies when there is no translator available. Also, incorporated are broader questions to help with answering demographic type questions.









#### Limitations

- Unable to see or read the text
- Limited scope of questions available
- Unable to understand the specific dialect

## How Hennepin EMS uses this guide

- Every ambulance has a tablet used for electronic charting. The translation guide is available as an interactive PDF document on the tablet.
- Used in the current format for approximately 8 months.
- Is easily adaptable and editable so changes or updates occur as needed.

### **Future directions**

- More languages
- Include picture diagrams
- Incorporate audio for each question so a patient may listen and then select an answer
- This concept can be expanded into areas where language or other types of communication barriers are frequently encountered.