



## Practice sting 2022-07

### Practice sting Communication in a foreign language

When communicating with a patient in a language that is not the mother tongue for both the healthcare provider and the patient, the chance exists that miscommunication will occur. The miscommunication below shows that there is not only a medical risk, but also a cost risk.

#### Notification

A pharmacy assistant dispenses Imraldi® (adalimumab) to a foreigner who does not speak Dutch and whose native language is not English. At the first delivery, the pharmacy assistant mentions to the patient using English that the patient must keep the pens in the 'fridge'. Although fridge is the correct term, the patient interprets this as having to keep the pens in the freezer. He arrives at the rheumatology outpatient clinic with a frozen syringe. Since Imraldi® should not be kept in the freezer, the pens are discarded. The patient got new pens with a purchase price of three hundred euros per pen.

#### Analysis

The above notification shows that a good explanation to a foreigner can be very difficult. Especially if it has to be done in a language that is not the mother tongue of both the pharmacy employee and the patient.

#### Recommendations

##### For pharmacists and pharmacy assistants

- Make an inventory of the languages which the pharmacists and pharmacy assistants speak.
- Make use of foreign information leaflets and possibly tools such as Google Translate.
- Use the following interview technique if both the pharmacy employee and the patient speak reasonable English or another foreign language: the pharmacy employee provides the information and afterwards asks the patient to tell in his own words what he has heard. When the employee only asks whether the information has been understood, the answer will usually be 'YES'. This interview technique is also recommended for patients with low health literacy.