

## **HealthBlog**

***Thoughts, comments, news, and reflections about healthcare IT from Microsoft's worldwide health director Bill Crounse, MD, on how information technology can improve healthcare delivery and services around the world.***

### **Unified Communications as a platform for healthcare sign and language interpreter services**

I'm back in the saddle after taking a few weeks of much needed vacation and family time over the Holidays. Forgive me for lapsing on my weekly HealthBlog postings, and for my failure to wish my loyal readers Seasons Greetings and Happy New Year.

Right before my Holiday break, I attended the [World Healthcare Innovation and IT Congress](#) in Washington, D.C., at the [Mandarin Oriental Hotel](#). In my last posting, I told you about Kevin Kelly's terrific keynote at the event. I also referenced that I was at the conference to participate in a panel discussion moderated by Dr. David Brailer, former [ONCHIT](#) director and now founder of Health Evolution Partners. Other panelists included Dr. Jonathan Perlin, Chief Medical Officer for [Hospital Corporation of America](#), and Dr. Jeffrey Gruen, Chief Medical Officer for [Revolution Health](#). The panel addressed the topic of "The Technological Tipping Point for Healthcare--Who Will Lead the Next Revolution?"

Just before I left the conference, I spent some time on the exhibit floor where I came across a small company called [LifeLinks](#). The company specializes in providing sign and language interpreter services to hospitals and healthcare organizations to help them comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992. If you run a hospital or healthcare organization you are all-too-familiar with the challenges and costs associated with meeting ADA compliance for patients who are non-English speaking, deaf, mute or disabled. Sign and interpreter services can become a major line item in your budget, not to mention the fact that providing local interpreter services for every nationality that might present at the door of your ER can be next to impossible to do especially in emergencies where time is a critical factor.

LifeLinks is an example of a growing number of companies that are now providing interpreter and sign services for healthcare organizations on the Net. If you are a regular reader of HealthBlog, you know that I am an advocate for using Internet communication technologies to extend the reach of healthcare providers and help us provision healthcare information and certain kinds of medical services far more efficiently and at less cost. I hadn't given much thought to using the Net to provision interpreter services, but it certainly makes sense. Companies such as LifeLinks are able to offer on-demand interpreter and sign language services across the globe using commodity audio and video communication technologies over the Internet. Providers, patients, family members, and interpreters can all see and hear each other during the interview and examination

process. This helps facilitate safer, higher quality, and much more satisfying care. It is a terrific use for low-cost unified communication technologies in healthcare.

Next week I'm off to the UK for meetings with executives and customers across the pond. Following that, I'll be traveling "down under" for a whirlwind four-city series of meetings in Australia. I'll keep my camera handy and send you a few reports along the way.

Bill Crounse, MD Senior Director, Worldwide Health [Microsoft Corporation](#)



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