

Who is in charge here?

The situation:

In cubicle 6 on a ward in a local hospital a patient has been admitted. There are various professionals leaning over and around a patient lying in bed. They are all keen on performing their duties.

Scene 1

In one corner of the room dedicated to the nursing staff, Carole, who is the matron (and senior nurse), and Agata, a nurse, are having the following conversation:

Carole (to Agata): You've done the medical interpreting training, haven't you, Agata? Do you mind helping us out and being the interpreter for the patient who is in cubicle 6? I think you were there when he was admitted.

Agata (to Carole): There are about six different professionals around the bed asking him questions. How am I going to interpret for them if they are all talking at once?

Carole (to Agata): Sorry Agata. I can't help you with that one. I am sure you will figure out what to do.

Agata (to Carole): But the poor man. He looks terrible. I am going to fetch him a glass of water. Which hat am I supposed to be wearing? Am I a nurse here or am I an interpreter?

Scene 2

Agata is bringing a glass of water for the patient and introduces herself to everyone, the patient and the professionals who are still gathered around the bed.

Agata: Hello. My name is Agata. I have come to interpret for you all and for the patient.

(She translates everything for the patient.)

Social worker *(to Agata):* Please ask him if he knew the people who employed him. Sorry, what was his name again *(showing at the patient)?*

Agata *(thinking impatiently):* I have to remind her again – is she the police officer or from Social Services? – to address the patient directly in the first person. For goodness sake, why don't they have to have at least a basic introduction into the rules "How to work with an interpreter"?

(Looks back down at the patient and then addresses the social worker): Oh! But his clothes are soaking wet. We need to get him into some dry clothes.

Social worker *(to Agata):* I am sorry. Did you say you were the interpreter? Why are you wearing a nurse's uniform? Who's in charge here?