



SILVINA DE LA IGLESIA

After months of managing symptoms on her own and exchanging messages with her doctor on the patient portal, Leslie was determined to keep her in-person appointment at the hospital, despite the COVID 19. Strict entrance restrictions due to the pandemic, interacting with Security to explain the purpose of her visit and answering questions related to COVID-19 symptoms could potentially add considerable frustration and stress to her visit. She knew that medical staff would be wearing masks that covered their mouths, and she would be unable to rely on lipreading or facial expressions to understand them. She anticipated encountering these obstacles repeatedly with receptionists, nurses, doctors and many others.

At Mount Sinai Health System, we strive to improve the patient experience every step of the way, focusing on their unique communication needs and working together to find solutions that foster effective communication. Leslie reached out to us to let us know about the communication barriers, and we entered a record of her needs in the Permanent Comments section of her EHR, as there is not a place to note her communication needs in the EHR at this time.

In collaboration with Patient Safety, Infection Prevention, Health Education, and Patient Experience staff, we created a COVID 19 screening tool with visual elements and written in plain language so patients can easily point to their symptoms. We also confirmed with Infection Prevention staff that clear masks were suitable for specific patient encounters and made sure staff and doctors wore them while interacting with Leslie. Simple steps to anticipate the needs of our patients with hearing loss can make a significant difference to elevate their experience with our health care system.

Silvina de la Iglesia is Associate Director, Language Services, Office of Patient Experience at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City.