

Memories from Dr. Nelva Lee - First Chair of the National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters (NBCMI) February 22, 2019

The year was 2007, Izabel Arocha then President of the IMIA contacted me and asked if I would join her on a task force to bring about certification efforts. I jumped at the chance to assist her in these endeavors, as that was the reason why I founded MiTio - To advance the education and certification credentials of bilingual individuals in Hospitals and Clinics across America.

- Initial days of Certification workgroup

When I first started on the workgroup, it had been ongoing for about a year prior to my arrival, and we were meeting weekly to discuss test questions and certification initiatives in general. This went on for about another six months and then things got interesting.

- Workgroup transforms into Certification Task Force

In less than a year the workgroup transformed into the Certification Task Force. Many had talked about the need for such certification, but no one until now was doing anything about it. We were the forerunners, the first to take on the challenges and we reaped what every “first” endures - pressure and criticism. The Task Force was in place for over a year and met weekly. We discussed the need for third party validation and thus sought to obtain it. The task force completed development of the certification exam, and the validation process could now begin.

- SME's and Validation process

Once the exam was developed, we now needed to get it validated by a third party. I was tasked with putting together the SME's – Subject Matter Experts from across the nation to validate each specific question. I worked closely with the liaison of the validation company to vet SME's, invite them to our team, and sat in numerous SME calls where each exam question was vetted and validated to insure its accuracy and validity to the industry. The SME validation process would go on for several months, then we had to pre-test the actual exam in its entirety several times, once all of that was completed, we could then launch the exam. This is a simplification of a process that was methodical, grueling, and very intense. We accomplished our goal and launched the National Certification Exam on October 2009.

- First year of NBCMI

Once the certification exam was officially launched, a need for board members arose and selections were made initially from those on the task force.

I am honored and grateful that I was able to be a part of this momentous event in our industry's history and believe that compulsory not optional certification of every medical interpreter is on the horizon.

Dr. Nelva Lee, Founder and CEO – The Medical Interpreting and Translating Institute Online – MiTio