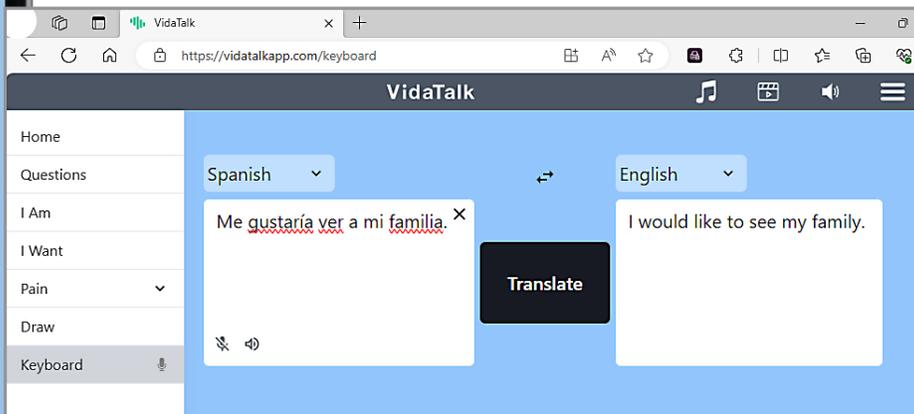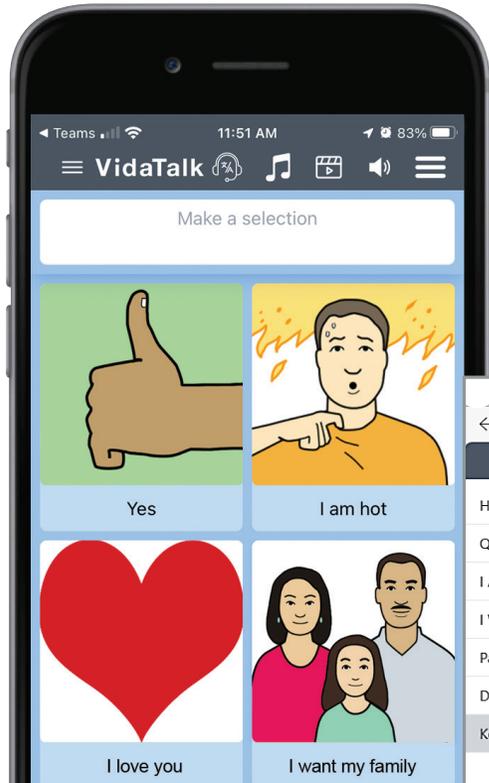# Interactive communication tool now available for patients and families

Imagine having to go to a hospital and being unable to communicate because you're hard of hearing or you don't speak English. Maybe you wake up in an ICU bed and are intubated. Any one of these communication barriers may leave a patient or a patient's loved ones feeling overwhelmed or lost. BJC's Patient Experience team announced a new interactive tool to help close the communication gap in scenarios like these.

VidaTalk was piloted at five BJC hospitals including Barnes-Jewish Hospital, with positive results and is now available for all BJC patients and their families free of charge. It offers more than 100 simple phrases in 40 languages to allow patients to express needs, feelings and pain levels/location. The tool also features point-and-click images, sentences and offers text-to-talk capability. It is especially useful to understand and answer simple, non-clinical needs without having to call for an interpreter.

Christopher Fan, BJC director of language services, says VidaTalk has been welcomed by patients, visitors and employees whose first language is not English as a potential starting point to bridge communication gaps. "Patients, visitors and team members now have access to a tool that can increase their ability to communicate and understand simple requests like, 'Where is the cafeteria?' or 'I'd like to see my family,'" he says. "Use of this resource may alleviate fears and concerns of effective communication when an interpreter may not be present or available at that time, or when questions or statements are simple, non-medical needs that can be answered."

While VidaTalk can be used to express basic needs, it does not and will not replace the hospital's language services and qualified medical interpreters, which all patients and visitors have access to free of charge.

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