

Do We Translate ‘Dementia’ as ‘痴呆症’? Notes on Medical Terminology Translation and Online Resources for Translators

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In this paper, I draw upon my experience of co-managing a medical translation project, and discuss how English-Chinese medical translation students should be guided in their translation practice. Citing the case of ‘dementia’ and its Chinese translations available in various online resources, including well-known terminology databases such as 术语在线 (<https://www.termonline.cn/>), and the UNTERM Portal (<https://conferences.unite.un.org/unterm/search>) as created by the UN’s Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) to support the provision of high-quality language services for intergovernmental meetings, I take issue with the general recommendation where one mines the internet for a translation when translating terminologies, and argue that this approach can have adverse impact on the users of medical translation, who include patients themselves and their family. I propose that we re-assess the current practice of English-Chinese medical translator training, and train translators to critically use online resources and adopt an innovative approach when necessary.

Note: ‘痴呆’ in ‘痴呆症’ means ‘being retarded’ or ‘retardedness’; ‘症’ means ‘syndrome’.