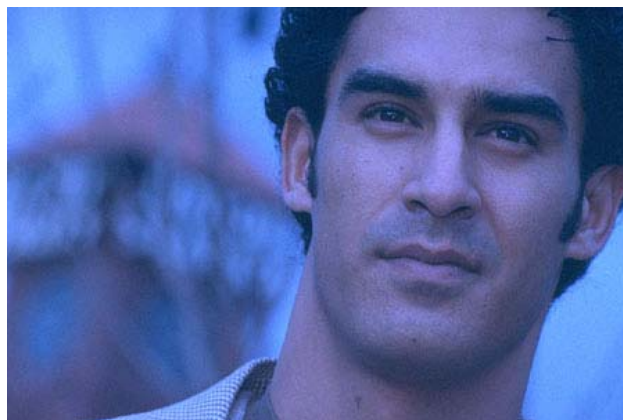


Juan's Story



A SHORT STORY BY

Amy Glenn Vega

JUAN'S STORY

A note from the author

Dear Reader,

I am pleased that you have decided to participate in this self-study course. In the next several pages you will find a story about a young man named Juan, who traveled from Oaxaca, Mexico, to work in the United States. He finds himself in North Carolina, employed as a painter. One day, a nagging pain in his side and an accident on the job lead Juan to seek care at a local hospital. In the hospital, Juan befriends a nurse named Mark. Through their interactions, Juan learns about the American health care system and Mark learns about Juan's culture and way of life.

The story is divided into ten chapters. At the end of each chapter you will find one or two review questions that will give you a chance to see if you have learned the same lessons that Juan and Mark have. Please complete the review questions by circling the correct answer on the following answer sheet for each corresponding question. Keep in mind that this story is purely fictitious, as are the characters and the hospital mentioned in the story. However, many of the scenarios and situations in which the characters interface are based on situations that have happened in "real life." This story is not intended to serve as a definitive guide about cultural differences between North Americans and Latin Americans. Its purpose is merely to give you some insight into some North American/Latin American cultural differences that have frequently been observed in the health care environment, and to get you thinking about how you can successfully build bridges where gaps are often found.

Taking the initiative to learn more about the growing diverse populations that we serve in our community is just one more way that we can care for people. It is my hope that this self-study course will help you to do just that.

Sincerely,

Amy Vega

Chapter 1

Juan Fuentes Cerrano looked at his watch. It was four fifteen. Only forty-five minutes till his shift was over! *Gracias a Dios!* His right side had been hurting him all day long, and seemed to be getting worse. He imagined that it was probably only muscle strain, since he did a lot of bending, stretching, and lifting at his painting job. He'd had some muscle aches before, but it was much worse today.

Juan dipped his paintbrush into the can of cream-colored paint and reached up to finish painting the trim on the windowsill of the house where his crew was working. As he reached up, he felt the sharp pain in his side again, and this time he felt it more in his stomach. *Ay!* It hurt so bad he almost cried out loud.

He didn't want to do that, though. Carlos, Lazaro, and José, his three brothers, in addition to his cousin Elidio, were all working just below him. If they heard him cry out in pain, they would mock him for days. How un-*macho* it would be to show his pain! So he bit his lip and continued painting.

He tried to distract himself by thinking about his family. He pictured them in his mind: First he saw Guadalupe, his wife of three years. She was back in Oaxaca, Mexico. How he missed her! Like many young Mexican men, Juan had gone to work in the United States because there were plenty of jobs and the pay was pretty good. His family stayed behind, like many other Mexican families did when their husbands, sons, and other male relatives went to work, but they received money from Juan on a regular basis. Juan was lucky, since his paycheck provided enough to support his own living expenses, and was still able to send several hundred dollars home to Guadalupe every month.

When he had left to come to work in *los Estados Unidos*, Guadalupe had been four months pregnant with their first baby. She wrote to Juan that the baby had been born last October and was healthy. It was a girl!!! Guadalupe named her Yolanda. She sent pictures of the baby to Juan over the past couple of months, and he wanted nothing more than to bring Guadalupe and Yolanda up to North Carolina. It would take some time, but Juan was patient. In the meantime, he put the pictures of baby Yolanda in his shirt pocket every day, keeping her close to his heart.

Juan applied the last few strokes of paint to the windowsill. He dropped the paintbrush onto the tarp below, then picked up the can of paint in his right hand. Slowly and carefully, he began to back down the ladder toward the ground. All of a sudden, the pain in his right side seized him again. *¡Ay, Dios mío!* It was worse than it had been all day. Juan felt sweat breaking out on his forehead and began to feel dizzy. He clenched onto the rung of the ladder as tightly as he could and bit his lip again, hoping that the pain would pass. Juan tried to take a deep breath, but felt too weak to even breathe. He felt his head spinning, and his body went limp.

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Mark Randall was just finishing up the dressing on a patient's wound when he saw the familiar red lights announcing the arrival of an ambulance. He secured the dressing with a few pieces of tape and gave the patient the rest of the tape and another roll of gauze. "Now you'll need to change this dressing once a day. Don't forget to clean out the wound like we talked about before, and watch for those signs of infections that we also went over. What questions do you have for me?"

The elderly gentleman lifted his bandaged hand up to his eye level and looked at Mark's dressing with a careful eye. "Can't think of any now, son," he said. "Looks like I oughta be okay for now."

"Just call us back if you can think of any questions or if you have any more problems." Mark patted him on the shoulder and left the room to attend to the arriving emergency.

Outside, a rush of other nurses and the attending physician waited at the ambulance entrance for their patient. "What have we got?" Mark asked the crowd.

"Trauma call," replied Kate, a fellow Registered Nurse. "The guy was painting the second story of a house and took a tumble off of a ladder."

As the paramedics unloaded the patient from the back of the ambulance, Mark got a glance of the injured man. He looked young, probably in his early twenties. He had dark skin and was wearing clothes that were stained with paint. He appeared to be unconscious.

Kate sighed. "Another one of them Spanish people," she said.

Mark looked at her. "Spanish?" he asked.

"Yeah, he's Spanish. Look how dark his skin is."

"Well, we don't know that yet. Let's wait until we get our patient in here before we start doing the assessment. But I think what you're trying to say is that he's probably 'Hispanic' or 'Latino.'"

"Hispanic, Spanish, Latino... what's the difference?"

"Well, you're talking about three different things. If you call him Spanish, that means he's from Spain. It's only a guess – but this person is most likely from Latin America, which would make him a Latino. And if he is from any Spanish-speaking country, then he is Hispanic."

Kate looked at him, perplexed. "Well, still wouldn't Latinos and Hispanics be the same thing?"

"Most of the time. Most of the patients that we see here will be both Hispanic *and* Latino, but from time to time, Hispanics are not Latinos and vice versa. Take for instance someone from Brazil. Brazil is in Latin America, so that person would be Latino... but the language of Brazil is Portuguese, not Spanish. So he'd be Latino, but not Hispanic. And in the same way, a person from Spain speaks Spanish and is Hispanic – but not Latino."

"Okay. So I'm guessing this guy is from Mexico, since most of our Spanish-speaking patients that we see here are. So that would make him Hispanic as well as Latino?"

"Right. But don't assume he's from Mexico. He could very well be from another Latin American country, such as Guatemala, or Costa Rica. Even between different countries in Latin America, there are different dialects of Spanish and different cultural patterns. It's important for us to keep in mind that not all Latin Americans are carbon copies of each other."

Kate looked at Mark, shaking her head. "Okay, Mr. Smarty Pants, I think I understand what you're saying, but what should we call the patient... Mexican, Hispanic, Latino, or what?"

"Call him by his name," said Mark, with a smirk. "And if you need to refer to him by the language he speaks, just refer to him as a 'Spanish-speaking' patient. That is, if he *is* in fact a Spanish-speaker."

"Okay, okay, okay...I get the picture! One way or the other, we better get a translator."

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Mark laughed. "I think you mean an 'interpreter.'"

"Oh yeah? What's the difference?"

"An interpreter is someone that bridges a language gap verbally... they do the talking. A translator, on the other hand, is someone that writes from one language to the other. Interpreters speak, translators write."

"This is very helpful, but our patient's on the way in."

The paramedics wheeled the gurney into a patient room and transferred the young man to a bed. They quickly gave a report of their observations and their care for the patient to the nurses in the room, while Mark looked down at the young man's face. His eyes began to flutter open.

"Look – he's coming to," Mark announced to the others in the room.

The patient's eyes flew wide open, and he immediately grimaced as if in terrible pain. His right arm slowly raised up to his right side. "Ay, Dios" he said, softly.

Recognizing the patient's language as Spanish, Mark leaned over and asked "Do you speak any English...¿habla ingles?"

The patient looked at him and winced in pain again. "Ingles... yes, I do." He replied. "I... hurt. Very bad." He pointed to his side.

"It's okay," Mark replied. "We'll take care of you. What's your name?"

The patient didn't reply. He appeared not to understand.

"¿Cómo se llama?" Mark asked, using the little bit of Spanish that he knew.

"Oh... soy Juan," replied the patient.

Mark nodded. "Don't worry, Juan. *No se preocupe*. We're going to examine you to find out what is causing the pain, and we'll do our best to fix the problem."

Juan had a confused look on his face, and again, he appeared not to understand.

"¡Ay... ay ay ay!" he suddenly cried out in pain, and everything was dark again.

Review questions:

- 1) Why was Juan afraid to show his pain?
 - a) He didn't want his boss to send him home for being sick
 - b) It would be un-*macho* to show pain
 - c) He believed that suffering would bring him closer to his wife and daughter in Mexico
 - d) He was afraid of doctors and didn't want anyone to talk him into going to one

- 2) What is the difference between an interpreter and a translator?
 - a) There is no difference, they are the same thing
 - b) An interpreter writes, and a translator speaks
 - c) A translator writes, and an interpreter speaks
 - d) Interpreters are Hispanic and translators are Latino

Chapter 2

Juan awoke again. He remembered going unconscious and waking up several times. The pain was getting worse every minute. He knew that he was in a hospital, or at least he thought so – he remembered being in the back of an ambulance and being moved to a hospital room. He briefly recalled a man in a green jacket speaking to him. He was pretty sure that the man was either a doctor or a nurse. He understood the Spanish that the man spoke, but not the English. He remembered the man asking him his name, and he had told them – Juan.

A light flashed in Juan's eyes, and he looked up to see one of the caregivers waving a pen light in front of his face. The person with the light was saying something in English that he could not understand. Juan felt his arm being squeezed and realized that a blood pressure cuff was tightening around it, while another caregiver stood next to the electrical monitor awaiting the reading. All around the room were other caregivers, moving about busily, touching him, putting things on his body, and talking to him in a language he could not understand. Juan knew English very well, but ¡Ay! For some reason, none of what they were saying was making sense to him right now.

Then Juan saw him again, the man that had spoken some Spanish to him. He glimpsed out of the corner of his eye and saw that the man was wearing a name badge that said *Mark, RN*.

“Mark?” Juan said weakly.

Mark looked at Juan and smiled. “That’s me,” he said. “How are you feeling?”

Juan knew he was speaking English but he couldn’t understand it.

“No le entiendo,” he said, meaning ‘I don’t understand.’

“Oh... no entiende.” Mark said. He leaned down and put his hand on Juan’s shoulder. “Juan, usted necesita tener una operación,” he said, in slow, choppy Spanish. *You need to have an operation.*

“Una operación?” Juan asked. “¿Por qué?” *Why?*

Mark thought for a minute about how he could explain Juan’s condition in Spanish. “Su apéndice... es muy enfermo. Tenemos que sacarlo. Si no lo sacamos, usted puede morir.” *Your appendix... is very sick. We have to take it out. If we don’t take it out, you could die.*

Juan suddenly felt very scared. “Pues...” he began, “si lo sacan ustedes con la operación, me salvarán la vida?” *If you take it out with the operation, you will save my life?*

“Sí, that’s right.” said Mark. He squeezed Juan’s hand in his own. “No tenga miedo, mi amigo. Lo vamos a cuidar bien.” *Don’t be afraid, my friend. We’re going to take good care of you.*

Juan took a deep breath. He closed his eyes and began to silently pray.

Dios Mio – My God... I am scared. Please let these people save my life and take good care of me. Please take care of Guadalupe and Yolanda if anything happens to me. Please deliver me from this pain and from this illness. Let me be healthy again, very soon. Amen.

Juan felt his bed rolling, and he opened his eyes. Mark was standing over him. “We’re going to prep you for surgery,” he said.

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Juan didn't understand Mark completely, but he felt pretty sure that Mark was letting him know that they were going to get him ready for the operation. Although he was scared, he was also relieved, because he knew that he would be out of pain soon. It was the worst pain that he had ever felt, and Juan was certain that he could not bear it a second longer.

He saw two large white doors open before him, and two female nurses wearing blue gowns and blue hair caps stepped through the doors. "Hi," one of them said to Juan. "We're going to get you ready for your operation." Juan heard the two nurses speaking to Mark, but again, could not understand them. He closed his eyes and felt his bed moving again, through the two big white doors.

This is it, he told himself. Juan closed his eyes and tried to relax. He knew that it would all be over very soon.

Juan awoke to strange noises, strange smells, and although he could hardly open his eyes, he could just barely glimpse that he was in a strange place. He was lying in a bed... a hospital bed. The head of the bed was tilted up slightly, and he could hear the soft "beeps" from an electronic monitor close to the bed. Juan managed to open his eyes the rest of the way and looked down at himself in the bed. He was wearing a white gown and was covered with blankets up to his chest. His left arm was turned up and there was a tiny tube placed in his arm, taped down and connected to a machine next to his bed that had a hanging bag of fluid on it. There was a television mounted on the wall across from him, and it was turned on to a news channel, with the volume off. Juan heard snoring.

He turned his head to the right, following the sound of his snores. There, in a recliner chair next to the window, sat his brother Carlos. He was sleeping soundly and snoring quite loudly.

Juan tried to call his name. "Carlos," he said softly, but as the words left his mouth, he felt a sharp pain in his side. "Ay..." Juan said, and grabbed his side in response to the pain. Through the gown, he could feel that there was a bandage on his side, covering his skin. *¿Qué es eso?*... What is that?...thought Juan.

He was confused. He didn't know why he was here, or what had happened to his side. "Carlos," he called again, a little bit louder. Carlos continued to snore. "CARLOS!" He finally mustered the strength to yell his brother's name, which did the trick. Carlos awoke and rubbed his eyes.

"Ay... ¿hermanito, cómo te sientes?" Carlos asked. *Little brother, how do you feel?*

Juan clutched his side and winced in pain. "¿Qué pasó? No recuerdo nada." *What happened? I don't remember anything.*

Carlos stood up from the chair and went to Juan's bedside. He began to recount the events of the prior day for Juan. Juan had been having pains in his side all day long... and as much as he had tried to hide it from his brothers, they realized that he was hurting and were worried about him all day long. Juan had passed out and fell a short distance from a ladder while painting. They called an ambulance for him, which took him to the emergency room. Juan had been examined by a doctor, who had done some tests and had discovered that the source of his pain was an inflamed appendix. Luckily, there had been no serious harm from the fall, but an appendectomy was needed to save Juan's life. Juan had gone into surgery at 8:00 last night. It had taken just a couple of hours, and he had done very well during the operation. A nurse in the recovery room woke Juan up immediately after his surgery, but he didn't remember it.

It was 10:30 in the morning, the day after Juan's surgery. He felt tired, sore, and a little thirsty. He asked Carlos to call a nurse into his room.

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Carlos went into the hall and motioned for a nurse to come into the room. A moment later, a young, pretty blonde nurse entered the room. "Hi," she said to Juan. "How are you feeling?"

Juan could understand her English better than he could in the emergency room the day before. "I hurt," he replied. "I... I have thirsty. Can I have something drink?" Funny... for some reason, he was having to struggle to speak English. He knew English very well, and could speak it very well... up until now anyway!

"Sure, I'd be happy to get you something to drink," said the nurse, as she smiled and reached for a small pitcher on the rolling tray next to his bed. She poured Juan a cup of water and adjusted his bed so that he could sit up and drink it.

"Small sips," she said. "I also want you to take a few deep breaths and cough." She placed a pillow over Juan's wound and showed him how to press on the pillow to reduce his pain while he was moving around in his bed – splinting, she called it.

Juan sipped his water and handed the cup back to her. "I... I have many questions," he began.

"Ask away," replied the nurse.

Juan thought for a moment. "How long... do I stay here?"

"Probably just a couple of days. The surgery went well, but you developed an infection, which we will need to watch for a little while. We're giving you medication to fight the infection." She pointed up to the bag of fluid that was connected to his IV. "But, if there are no other complications, I don't foresee you having to be here any longer than a few days. A doctor will be coming by to see you in a little while. You might want to ask him and see what he says."

"Okay," said Juan. "Also... I want to talk to my wife."

"No problem," said the nurse. "How can we get in touch with her?"

"Well...she is in Mexico. It will be a long-distance call."

"Oh," the nurse said. "We can't call Mexico from your room, unfortunately." She shrugged. "I'm sorry about that, hon. Can one of your family members maybe call her from home?" She looked over at Carlos, who had returned to the chair by the window.

Juan was a little disappointed. "Maybe... I will ask him to."

The nurse smiled. "Well, let me know if there's anything else I can do for you. My name is Liz and I'll be here until two o'clock today."

Liz turned and began to walk out of the room when Juan stopped her.

"Wait... one thing more, please?" Juan struggled to sit up in his bed.

"Yes?" Liz turned around to face him again.

Juan had begun to remember the events of yesterday, and he remembered Mark, the nurse that spoke some Spanish. "I would like to see Mark. Is he here now?"

Liz looked confused at first. "Mark? We don't have a Mark that works on this fl- oh, wait a minute! You must mean Mark in Emergency. The guy that speaks Spanish?"

Juan nodded.

"I'll see if I can find him for you and let him know that you'd like to talk to him. Is there a message I can give him for you?"

Juan shook his head no. "Not now... just tell him I would like to... how you say? Give my thanks. He was kind to me yesterday."

"I see," Liz smiled. "I'll let him know." She left the room, and Juan sunk back down into his pillow. He glanced over at Carlos.

"So," asked Carlos in his native language, "how are you feeling?"

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Juan shrugged. "The pain is not as bad as yesterday. I am sore, but it is not as bad. It just feels strange to be here in a hospital, *tu sabes?*"

Carlos nodded. He knew exactly what Juan meant. Carlos had stayed in the hospital before himself, after a car accident that had left him with fractured legs and a crushed pelvis. It had been scary, because like Juan, he had never been inside of a hospital before in his life.

Things were different back in Oaxaca. If you got sick or injured, you went to see a *curandero*, a folk healer who would give you a remedy that would cure you. Sometimes it was an herb or a tea to take, or sometimes it was a special ritual or prayer that was needed to get rid of illness. There were no clinics or hospitals for miles and miles around. You didn't see that kind of thing until you got to the big city, which was far, far away from Oaxaca. In fact, Carlos, Juan, and his brothers had never been to a doctor before in their lives until they came to the United States. The hospital was a scary place, because in many parts of Mexico, a hospital was where a person went to die.

Yet, it was completely different here. Mark had told Juan that the operation would save his life. And Liz had told him that he would be going home in just a couple of days. This definitely sounded hopeful. Maybe hospitals in the United States had a different role in caring for people, thought Juan.

Carlos sat forward in his chair and looked at his watch. "*Hermano*," he began, "it is time for me to leave and go in to work. Lazaro and José will be here in a few minutes. They will stay with you for the rest of the day. And Elidio, *tu primo*, may be coming over here also."

Juan nodded. Carlos stood up and walked over to Juan's bed. He embraced his brother. "Qué Dios te bendiga, hermanito." *May God bless you, little brother.*

Carlos removed from his pocket several small cards and placed them on the rails of Juan's bed. One was a picture of Jesus, with his hands open and reaching forward, and a heart on fire on his chest. Another one was a picture of the Virgin Mary, holding the baby Jesus and weeping. Yet another was a picture of an angel. On the back of the cards were prayers printed in Spanish. Juan and his brothers were Catholic, and their religion and faith were a very integral part of their life. "Para ti," said Carlos, *For you*. "Say the prayers every day and you will be healed." He waved as he left Juan's room. Juan closed his eyes and tried to rest. He only been awake for a few minutes, but already, he was exhausted. He felt better, having awoken and known that Carlos had been with him the whole time by his side, and he felt at peace with the watchful eyes of the saints around him on the tiny cards. He began to recite one of the prayers, a *novena* in Spanish, that he knew by heart. But before he could finish the prayer, he drifted off to sleep.

Review Questions:

- 1) Why had Juan never been inside of a hospital before?
 - a) There were no hospitals near his home back in Oaxaca, Mexico
 - b) Hospitals were associated with death and dying in Oaxaca
 - c) Most of his health care needs had been handled by a *curandero*, a folk healer
 - d) All of the above

- 2) Why did Carlos put cards with pictures of religious figures on Juan's bed?
 - a) To alert the staff to the fact that he was Catholic
 - b) So that Juan could be watched by the eyes of the saints
 - c) So that Juan could read the prayers on the backs of the cards
 - d) Both b and c

Chapter
3

When Juan awoke, it was dark outside. The only light in the room came from the television mounted on the wall, which was now on a talk show program. The guests on the talk show stood up and started fighting, and Juan chuckled softly to himself as he watched the charade on TV. Lazaro, José, and Juan's cousin Elidio were also in the room. Lazaro was relaxing in the chair and José and Elidio were sitting on the floor, using their jackets as cushions.

José heard his brother laugh and stood up on his knees to peek at Juan in the bed. "So, you're finally awake now, Juan," he said, smiling. "You've slept all day!"

Juan sat up in his bed. He felt more pain in his side than he had this morning. "What do you think caused this to happen to me?" he asked José.

José shrugged. "I do not know. You are a hard-working man. You have been a faithful provider for your family, and you have been going to mass every Sunday. How could the saints be angry with you and cause you this illness?"

Juan looked confused. Sickness and poor health were often seen as a punishment for a moral or spiritual shortcoming back home in Oaxaca. But like José had said, he had been trying very hard to live a righteous life and take care of his responsibilities to his family.

But then, he began to think of Claude. Claude was an older man from Haiti that Juan had met on his bus trip to North Carolina. He was traveling to the eastern part of the state for farmwork, while Juan and his brothers were heading to the Sandhills to look for work in either construction or painting. Claude had sat next to Juan on the bus, and had coughed a lot during the trip. He told Juan that he was afraid he might have tuberculosis. There was a witch back in Haiti that did not like Claude and had cast a spell on him for poor health.

Juan remembered Claude's story very clearly. "Maybe the saints are not angry with me. Maybe it was *un brujo*, a witch that cast a spell on me to make me sick."

Lazaro shook his head. "Ay, hermanito, no one would do that to you. You are a good man. You have no enemies here, you are a friend to everyone. Your health is in the hands of the saints, so we must pray for you to be well again."

Juan winced as a sudden pain hit his side. "I need my nurse, Liz," he said to José. "See if she is here."

José stepped into the hall and went to the nurse's desk to ask for Liz. She had already completed her shift and had left for the day, so another nurse returned to the room with José.

"I have a little bit of pain," Juan told her.

She explained to Juan that he had pain medicine coming through the IV line into his arm, and showed him that all he had to do was push a button to get the medicine. Juan was actually in a lot of pain, but didn't want the nurse - nor his brothers and cousin - to know. He would wait to push the

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button and give himself pain medicine when he was alone. The nurse helped Juan to take a few more sips of water and told him that dinner would be coming soon. Juan thanked her as she left his room.

“Speaking of dinner,” said Elidio, “I am very hungry. Let’s go find the cafeteria.”

“Will you be all right if we leave you alone for a little while, *hermano?*” asked Lazaro.

Juan nodded. “Go ahead, I will be fine,” he said. His brothers and cousin stepped out into the hall in search of the cafeteria. A moment later, Juan heard a knock on the door.

“Yes,” Juan called out to the visitor. When the door opened and the visitor entered, Juan was excited to see that it was Mark.

“Mark,” he said, “¡Hola... gracias por venir!” *Hello, thank you for coming!*

Mark crossed the room to Juan’s bed and shook his hand. He sat down in the chair next to Juan’s bed. “How are you today? I heard your surgery went well.”

“Sí, I’m doing fine,” said Juan. “I want to thank you for your kindness yesterday. For speaking to me in my own language. I don’t know why, but I couldn’t understand English yesterday. I speak it every day, at my job. But I didn’t understand when I came to the hospital.”

Mark smiled. “That’s nothing to worry about,” he said. “Sometimes when people are in pain or crisis, they can’t communicate well in a second language, no matter how good they speak and understand it under normal circumstances. When you are scared or hurting, the language that you best communicate with is your own. But trust me, as soon as you’re feeling well again, you’ll be back to your same old bilingual self.” Mark smiled, and made Juan feel at ease.

Juan nodded. “That is good to know. I was very scared this morning. Nothing was making sense... I knew people were speaking English to me, but I couldn’t understand. And even this morning, I had a hard time talking to the nurse. I was beginning to think maybe I was crazy,” Juan said, suddenly looked down at his arm, where a plastic hospital bracelet was attached. “I was worried to see that even the name on my bracelet is not mine!”

Mark leaned forward to look at the bracelet. It read ‘Juan Cerrano’.

“So what is your correct name?” Mark asked.

“It is ‘Juan Fuentes Cerrano’.”

“Oh, I see. We left out ‘Fuentes’. Don’t worry – that’s pretty standard. Our hospital usually doesn’t usually put middle names on the bracelet. Just the first and last.”

“But... Fuentes is not my middle name.”

Mark looked confused. “So... why is it in the middle of your first and last name?” he asked.

“Ay, ay, ay,” Juan said, laughing softly. “Let me explain. You see, in Mexico, we use two last names. Our father’s last name, and our mother’s last name. ‘Fuentes’ is my father’s name, and it is my surname... my family name. ‘Cerrano’ is my mother’s last name. I use it at the end of my name out of respect for my mother, but ‘Fuentes’ – my father’s last name, is the name I would use as my last name in the United States.”

“Oh, I see now,” Mark replied, nodding with understanding. “I’m sorry about the mistake, Juan. I’ll do some checking around to see if we can change it and get it right for you.”

“Oh, please... do not worry,” Juan was quick to respond. “It is not a big problem.”

Mark glanced down at the bracelet again. “Are you sure, Juan?”

He nodded. “Really, it is all right.”

“Okay then... *Está bien,*” replied Mark with a smile.

“So tell me... how did you learn Spanish?”

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"I learned my Spanish when I was stationed overseas in Panama while I was in the Army. It's a bit rusty, but I guess I can get the point across."

"It is very good," said Juan, nodding.

Mark grinned. "Thanks. Anything I can do for you while I'm here?"

Juan thought for a moment. "I was told that I might be going home in a couple of days... is this true?"

"If that is what your nurse told you, then yes, I'm sure that's true."

"Good," said Juan. "This is my first time in a hospital, as a patient. This is scary for me, I don't know what to expect."

Mark leaned forward, intrigued. "You've never been in a hospital before?"

"Never."

"Really? But surely you were born in a hospital, weren't you?"

"No, I was born at home in Oaxaca, Mexico. Most people from Oaxaca are born in the home. Many people in Oaxaca do not go to the doctor at all during their lives, unless they are very sick and there are no other choices."

Mark seemed shocked. "Wow," he said. "I didn't realize you'd never been in a hospital before. I can see why it would be scary. What can I do to help you, Juan? How can I help you feel more comfortable here?"

"I wish you could stay with me the whole time that I am here!" laughed Juan. "I would still prefer to speak Spanish with the doctors and the nurses. I am not sure that my English will be good enough."

Mark nodded his head. "I certainly understand," he said. "Of course, I can't be here the whole time with you, but you can talk to your caregivers in whatever language you like, Juan. We have other employees that speak Spanish and English, and have been trained as interpreters. We can also have a service called Language Line that allows us to call interpreters and speak to them through the telephone." He patted the phone on the side of Juan's bed. "So never worry about finding someone that can speak Spanish, they are never farther away than this phone, right here."

"Ahhh," said Juan. "That is good to know. Now I can tell my brothers that they won't have to stay here with me all the time and interpret for me."

Mark shook his head. "Your brothers certainly don't have to interpret for you," he said. "It's our job to provide the interpreters. We want to make sure that the message is getting across accurately on both sides, so we only use interpreters that have been trained to interpret professionally. We also want to protect your confidentiality, in case there is anything that you want to keep private and personal during your time in our care."

"*Que bueno*," said Juan. "That's good. What a great thing for this hospital to do. But tell me one thing... will I have to pay for it? The interpreters that are used for me?"

"Absolutely not. Our hospital pays for the interpreter fees. It would be unlawful for us to charge you for that."

Juan winced. "*Pues...* speaking of the law," he began, "I... should tell you that..." he suddenly grew very quiet and hesitant to speak.

"I think I know what you want to say," said Mark. "And if I'm right, then you don't have to worry about that either."

Juan looked at him, confused. "I am not in the country legally," he said. "And this does not matter to your hospital?"

"No," said Mark. "Our job is to care for people. It doesn't matter where you are from, what

JUAN'S STORY

language you speak, or whether or not you are a legal resident of this country. Nobody can ask you if you are a legal alien while you are here in the hospital. Nobody can demand a social security card or immigration papers while you are in the hospital.”

Juan relaxed back onto his pillow. “Really,” he said. “I feel much better now! You see, I have heard stories from my friends... about getting sent back to Mexico because they do not have papers. Some of them were turned into *la migra*, immigration, by their jobs.”

“That may happen outside of the hospital,” said Mark, “but while you are here, your immigration status does not matter. You will not be turned into immigration by anyone here. Our job is to care for people, and that is just what we will do for you.”

Juan smiled. “*Bueno*, one less thing to worry about.” He sighed. “I am missing my wife and my daughter. They are back in Oaxaca, and I work in painting to support them. I am worried that if I cannot go back to work soon, I will have no money to send them.”

Mark frowned. “Does your wife know that you are here?”

“No. I asked Liz if I could call them, and she said that I cannot call Mexico from the phone in my room.”

Mark grinned. “Actually, you can,” he said. “Our gift shop sells international calling cards. If you or your brothers have five or ten dollars, I can get one for you downstairs, and we can use it to call Mexico through a prepaid long-distance company. Right here from your room.”

Juan smiled broadly. “I would like that,” he said.

Mark patted Juan on the shoulder. “Great. Would you like for me to get one this evening?”

“Actually,” began Juan, “I am very tired. I think I want to sleep now. Can you please bring it tomorrow, and I will try to call then?”

Mark nodded. “Sure, Juan. You get some rest and I’ll see you tomorrow.”

He stepped out of the room as Juan leaned back into his pillow. He used the remote control to turn off the television and closed his eyes to take a short nap. He was very tired, and was starting to feel sore again, so he punched his pain medicine button. He didn’t like having to use the pain medicine, but he was so sore! He took a deep breath and drifted off to sleep.

José, Lazaro, and Elidio, having finished their dinner in the cafeteria, stepped off of the elevator and into the nursing unit where Juan was staying. As they walked down the hall, they got some disapproving looks from the staff. While reaching for the doorknob to Juan’s room, a nurse named Leah stopped them.

“I’m sorry,” said Leah to the three men, “but our visiting hours are over for now.”

Lazaro looked at the nurse pleadingly. “It’s our little brother,” he said. “Please, he is far from home, and we are the only family he has here.”

Leah nodded. “I understand,” she said, “but he really needs his rest. It will help him get well faster if he can sleep right now. He needs to be in a room that is quiet and not so... well, crowded.”

The three men exchanged glances. “All right,” they said, “we will come back tomorrow. Can we go tell him good night?”

“Sure,” said Leah. “Thanks for understanding... it really is the best thing for him now to have limited time with visitors.”

José, Lazaro, and Elidio entered the room long enough to say good night to Juan, and found that he was already sleeping. They gathered their jackets out of the room and left the nursing unit.

Leah watched them walk away. She glanced over at John, one of the nursing assistants. “Did I do the right thing?” she asked him.

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“What do you mean?” John asked.

“I sent those men away... the ones that are visiting the Spanish-speaking patient. I mean, not only is it past visiting hours, but there were three of them... that's just too many to be in a room at a time. Why do they do that?”

“Well, from what I understand,” began John, “the concept of ‘family’ in their culture is different from ours. When we think ‘family,’ we tend to think of immediate family. For a lot of Hispanic people, family means extended family... not just brothers, sisters, and parents, but grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, sometimes even close friends and neighbors. I've seen on a lot of occasions that Spanish-speaking patients will have greater numbers of family members come to visit them at the hospital, and will often stay longer than people normally do when they're visiting.”

“I've kind of noticed it too. They seem to really make it a priority to be here for their loved one in the hospital. I was just wondering if maybe I should not have sent his family members home.”

“There are times when you just have to use your judgment.”

“I suppose it's pretty important for them to be physically present as often as they can, and for as many family members to be involved as possible. I guess as long as the visitors are not being disruptive, we should allow them to stay... knowing that they have such an important role in the healing process of the family member.”

“That sounds reasonable.” John nodded.

Leah chewed her lip and thought for a minute. “Yes,” she said. “Next time I think I may do things differently.”

Review Questions:

- 1) What should health care providers know about their patients concerning immigration status?
 - a) All patients must provide proof of immigration status within 24 hours of admission
 - b) It is unlawful to inquire about immigration status while a person is hospitalized
 - c) If you learn that the patient is an illegal alien, you have to call immigration
 - d) If you learn that the patient is an illegal alien, they must immediately be discharged from the hospital

- 2) What are sickness and poor health often attributed to in other cultures?
 - a) Punishment for a spiritual or moral wrongdoing
 - b) A supernatural force, such as witchcraft or bad luck
 - c) *El Hombre Bugi*, which is the Spanish term for “The Boogey Man”
 - d) a and b

Chapter
4

Juan awoke to see the cheery face of a housekeeper. She was emptying the trash in his room. “Good morning,” she said to him. “You doing all right today?”

Juan nodded. “Yes,” he said. “Just very hungry.”

The housekeeper chuckled. “They’ll be coming around soon with your breakfast.”

A few moments later, a lady wearing an apron entered his room and placed a tray in front of him. Juan had only eaten a little bit of the dinner they had brought him the night before, so he was glad to see the food arrive this morning. He removed the lid to see what they had brought him. He was somewhat disappointed with his breakfast, but ate some of it anyway since he was so hungry. There was a small bowl of sliced fruit, and Juan ate that. He drank a glass of water and pushed the tray away.

After he finished eating, there was a knock on the door and Liz entered his room. “Good morning,” she said, cheerfully. Glancing down at his tray, she saw that he had not eaten his hard-boiled eggs nor his toast, and he had not opened his carton of milk.

“Aren’t you hungry?” she asked.

Juan shook his head no. “No, thank you. I am fine.”

There was a knock at the door. Mark peeked into the room.

“Hola, Juan!” Mark said to the patient.

Juan was happy to see his new friend. “Mark, come in! Good morning.”

“I’ll leave you two to visit,” said Liz, as she smiled and stepped out of the room.

Mark looked down at Juan’s tray. “I hope I’m not disturbing your breakfast,” he said.

“No, I’m fine,” said Juan. “Not very hungry.”

Mark wrinkled his brow. “Are you sure? It looks like you didn’t eat much.”

Juan was quiet for a moment. “Well...” he began, “I am very hungry, but this is not the kind of food that I am used to eating. What do you like to eat for breakfast? Foods like this?”

Mark glanced at the eggs, toast, and milk. “Yes, this definitely looks good to me... are you not interested in any of this, then?” he asked, pointing to the food.

Juan shook his head. “Where I grew up in Oaxaca, we didn’t have refrigerators in our homes, so we couldn’t keep milk in our homes because it would spoil. We never cook our eggs in the shell, and we don’t eat much bread like this... we eat mostly tortillas made from flour or corn, at all of our meals.”

“I see,” said Mark, thoughtfully. “Wow, I guess it never dawned on me that not everyone ate hard-boiled eggs and toast for breakfast, and drank milk. Let me talk to the dietitians and see if we can get you something else to eat.”

“No, please,” Juan said immediately. “I don’t want to... how would you say, disrespect the people that have prepared this food? I don’t want to offend the people that work here.”

JUAN'S STORY

Mark shook his head. "You won't be offending anyone, I promise. Listen Juan, our job is to make you comfortable and help you get well. If you need something... like food, or pain medicine, or an extra blanket, or anything at all... you tell someone. We need your help to know what we should do to take the best care of you."

Juan dropped his head and looked embarrassed. "I'm sorry," he said. "This is a strange situation for me. I'm used to being my own boss... I wake up every day and go to work, fix my food, send letters to my wife and daughter, I am very independent. This is so different for me. It's hard to ask for things I need, I guess."

"Don't worry," said Mark. "You'll be out of here in a few days and things will get back to normal. But until then, remember what I told you – our job is to take care of you. The best way that we can do that is if you tell us how you're feeling and what you think you need. Okay?"

Juan nodded. "Está bien," he said. *That's fine.*

Mark pulled an envelope out of his jacket. "I have a surprise for you." He removed a small plastic card from the envelope. "This is a calling card for you. A gift from me." He smiled.

He helped Juan use the card to dial the 1-800 number and place a call to Mexico. Juan dialed the number for his mother and father-in-law's house, where his wife and daughter were living. The phone call woke Guadalupe up and she sounded grumpy.

"Bueno?" she said, sleepily.

"¡Guadalupe!" cried out Juan. "¡Mi corazón... *My heart!* ¿Cómo estás?"

Mark stepped out into the hall so that Juan could have a private conversation with his wife. He saw Liz making some notes in a chart and approached her when she was finished.

"How's our patient doing?" he asked.

"Oh, Juan? He's doing great." Liz nodded.

"This seems to be a whole different world for him," commented Mark. "He comes from a really different culture, you know."

"Well, he's been a great patient. Very easy to take care of. He doesn't ask for much."

"Ah," said Mark. "I'm glad you bought that up. I just had a conversation with him. It seems that there are things that he needs but he's afraid to say."

Liz cocked her head and looked at him curiously. "What do you mean?"

"Apparently he thinks it would be disrespectful to ask us for anything. Like his breakfast, for instance. He didn't eat much of that because he's not used to eating hard-boiled eggs and bread and drinking milk."

"No kidding? He said he wasn't hungry."

"Right, that's what he tried to tell me at first too. I get the impression that he doesn't want to create any more work for us or ask us to change anything that we would usually do for any other patient. He worries that it would offend us."

"I understand. I can call a dietitian to come interview him and get some more information about his dietary preferences, and maybe we can get him something different for lunch later today."

"Sounds good."

Liz went to the phone to call a dietitian, and Mark went to say goodbye to Juan before returning to work in the Emergency Department.

Juan was still on the phone, so Mark waved "bye" and motioned that he was going back to work. Juan smiled and waved. He was chattering away in Spanish and seemed happy to be able to talk to his wife.

JUAN'S STORY

On the way back to the Emergency Department, Mark could not get Juan off of his mind. He wanted to help his new friend have a good stay in the hospital, and get back home as soon as possible, but he knew that the cultural differences between Juan's way of life and the hospital were so very complex, and great in number. He wanted to learn more about Juan's culture and think of ways that he could help Juan better understand the hospital and the culture of the medical community.

Mark glanced at his watch. It was just a few minutes before 9:00. His lunch break was at 11:30, and he knew just where he would spend it today... in the Health Sciences Library.

Lunchtime arrived fast. In the library, Mark sat down in front of a computer and logged onto the Internet. He went to a search engine and typed in the words "Mexican culture." The screen went blank, then produced a page full of hits. Mark began clicking on the links to access the information.

He had a notepad with him and made notes whenever he found something that he thought was interesting or important. A half hour later, he had filled up five pages of note paper and had printed off some of the websites he found. He closed out the connection to the Internet and quickly left the library so that he could drop by Juan's room once again before returning to work for the afternoon.

Review Questions:

- 1) Juan didn't want to express his needs because:
 - a) He was embarrassed by not being able to speak English well
 - b) He was afraid that voicing his needs would be perceived as disrespectful
 - c) He was happy with everything that the care givers were doing for him
 - d) He didn't like his caregivers very much and avoided talking to him

- 2) Juan didn't like his breakfast because:
 - a) Eggs are usually not hard-boiled in Mexico
 - b) He was used to eating tortillas in place of bread
 - c) Milk was not a part of his diet in Mexico because of lack of refrigeration
 - d) All of the above

Chapter
5

Juan was sitting up in bed, chatting with a man, woman, and child, when Mark knocked on the door.

“Come in!” said Juan, enthusiastically. Mark could tell that Juan was happier each time he saw him arrive to visit. After doing his research, he felt pretty sure he knew the reason why. One of the websites had specifically discussed health care for Latin Americans. The site had said:

Latin Americans experience better health outcomes when they feel that they have formed relationships with their health caregivers. The establishment of mutual trust and respect between a Latin American patient and their health caregiver is critical to the patient's attitude in healing and in their ability and willingness to comply with the suggested plan of care. Latin Americans will often ask personal questions to their health care givers and will disclose personal information about themselves in an attempt to get to know their caregivers and establish trust and respect.

Mark remembered that Juan had talked a lot about himself... his life in Oaxaca, his immigration status, and even his experience in coming to the hospital for the first time. He remembered Juan had asked him questions about himself, like how he had learned Spanish and what types of food he liked to eat for breakfast. He realized that he was building a relationship with Juan, which could have a significant impact on Juan's progress.

Juan pointed to Mark and then to the three visitors. “Mark... I would like to introduce you to my cousin, Elidio. And this is his wife, Silvia, and his son, Chui.”

Mark stood up and shook hands with Elidio, then with Silvia, who gave a softer, more delicate handshake. “Nice to meet you,” he said. Then he looked at little Chui, who was sitting on the floor. “Hi, Chui,” he said. The child smiled, but quickly turned his head away. He seemed to be very shy.

“How did your phone call go this morning, Juan?” Mark asked.

Juan smiled. “Short... the phone card only let me talk for eight minutes. But I was happy to talk to Guadalupe. She was worried when I told her what happened, and she cried for a moment. But I told her that the Virgin had mercy on my life, and that I was going to be well. She felt better. She woke up Yolanda and let her babble on the phone. I really miss them.”

“Great. I'm glad you got through. How are things going today? Are you feeling better... ¿todo está bien?”

“Yes, much better. Still sore, but getting better.”

Mark glanced at Chui out of the corner of his eye. The child seemed to be fascinated with the *gringo*—the American— that spoke Spanish! He smiled at Chui.

Silvia watched Mark smiling at Chui, and her smile faded. Mark wasn't sure why. He turned his attention back to Juan. “Did the dietitian come talk to you today?”

JUAN'S STORY

“Oh, yes. We talked about the kind of food I like to eat, and they are going to bring me a lunch of *tortillas and frijoles*. . . the kind of beans I eat every day. I can't wait.”

Mark continued to watch Chui, out of the corner of his eye, who seemed a little bored and was squirming on the floor. He winked at him. Chui hid his face in his hands and shyly ran to his mother, burying his face in the hem of her dress.

Silvia glanced nervously back and forth between Mark and Chui. What was wrong, Mark wondered?

Juan looked at the little boy. “¿Qué haces, papito?” he asked Chui, smiling. *What are you doing, little man?*

Mark had an idea. He pulled a rubber glove out of a container on mounted on the wall. He blew it up and tied it at the opening, making a hand-shaped balloon out of it. He drew a face on it with the pen from his pocket. Chui watched him in awe. When Mark was finished drawing the face, he tossed it over to Chui. Chui giggled and reached for the balloon, but Silvia snatched him up in her arms and quickly walked out into the hall. “Perdóneme. . . . Por favor. . . . *Excuse me, please. . . .*” she said as she ran away.

Mark suddenly felt bad. He knew he had done something to upset Silvia, but he wasn't sure what. Elidio was also frowning disapprovingly. Juan suddenly seemed uncomfortable.

“Uh. . . well, it's been nice to meet your family Elidio.” He nodded to the scowling visitor, then looked at Juan. “It's time for me to get back to work,” he said, and excused himself from the room. “I'll come see you later again, Juan. Goodbye for now.”

When Mark left the room, Juan hung his head. “Lo siento, Elidio,” he said, *I'm sorry.*

Elidio sighed. “Está bien,” he said. “Pienso que el no sabe.” *It's all right. I think he doesn't know.*

During his break, Mark sat down with his notes and with the printed webpages. He began searching furiously on information about children. He wondered what he had done wrong with Chui, and why his mother had felt the need to remove him from the room so quickly.

Mark glanced at the word “children” on one of the printed webpages, and started at the top of the page to read the entire content.

The mal de ojo, or the “evil eye” is a folk illness that is commonly observed among Latin Americans. Babies and small children are especially susceptible. The evil eye is caused by a person looking admiringly at a baby or child for too long. The long look can transfer evil spirits or ill fate to the child, which may make him very sick.

Oops, thought Mark. He read further down the page.

The mal de ojo can be prevented by the admirer touching the child on the face, the head, or the hand. The touch shows that the admiration is sincere, for a jealous admirer would stay away from the child, staring from a distance.

No wonder, Mark said to himself. Poor Silvia probably thought I filled that rubber glove full of evil spirits and threw them at her son. I didn't touch him. That was my mistake. When I shook the hands of his mother and father, I probably should have reached down and shook his hand too, or patted him on the head.

He hoped that he would see Elidio, Silvia, and Chui later so that he could resolve the misunderstanding.

JUAN'S STORY

Review Question:

- 1) The evil eye is:
 - a) Caused by male nurses
 - b) A disease that is easily passed around in a hospital
 - c) A folk illness, caused by looking too long at a young child or baby
 - d) The North American equivalent of pinkeye

Chapter
6

Later that evening, Juan's dinner arrived. His tray held a plate full of tortillas, rice, beans, and chicken that the staff had prepared for him. He was delighted. Unfortunately, the food was a little too hot, so he set the lid of the tray aside to let it cool.

As good as a hot plate of tortillas would be, he could not eat them right now. He needed to eat cool foods... cold foods, even better. Being sick meant that his body was hot, and he needed to take in cool and cold foods and drink cool liquids to maintain a balance. He remembered before he left for the United States, when Guadalupe had first discovered that she was pregnant, they were eating lots of cold foods. Pregnancy was a hot condition too, and so Guadalupe was careful not to eat any hot foods and put her body out of balance. Juan had grown quite used to eating the cold foods with her. Except for the time when he had gotten sick with a cold, and she had prepared a separate plate at each meal of hot foods to help him restore his balance.

He closed his eyes and pictured her in his mind. *Ay*, he missed her so bad! He made up his mind right then that when he got out of the hospital he would return home to her. And he would hold his baby Yolanda in his arms for the very first time.

He heard footsteps approaching his door. He already knew who it was.

"Hola Mark," said Juan. "Come in."

Mark walked into his room, looking humbled. "Hi Juan. I see your dinner is here... would you like for me to come back later?"

"No, you are welcome to stay, please come sit down." Juan pointed to the chair beside his bed, and Mark had a seat there.

"I came to say I was sorry about Chui today. I didn't realize about the *mal de ojo*... but I did some research and I learned about it today."

"Oh, do not worry, my friend," said Juan. "I talked to Elidio after you left. We both agreed that you probably did not know about the *mal de ojo*, and that you meant no harm to Chui."

"If I see them again... I should touch Chui on the head or the hand, right?"

"Yes, that is right. It will be better next time, you'll see."

"Are they coming back to visit you while you're here?"

"Yes, I am sure they will. Lencillo, he is very lucky. He was able to bring his wife and son here to the United States. They came to North Carolina because my brothers and I were already here. We are all family... you know, very close. If any of us are sick we take care of each other. They will be back here, and you will have to chance to see them again."

"Good," said Mark. "I'm glad. I know what I will do next time I see Chui."

"He is a fine boy," said Juan. "He makes me miss my baby, Yolanda. I cannot wait to see her."

JUAN'S STORY

Mark leaned back in the chair. "So tell me, why are your wife and baby back in Mexico? Are you planning to bring them here?"

Juan looked sad. "I would love to bring them here, but it is too dangerous for them to cross."

"Cross the border? Why is that?"

"If you do not cross legally, you must use the services of a *coyote*. Not the animal... a person. A *coyote* is someone who gets across the borders, either in secret – by moving you in a vehicle, or by the river - or, by getting you papers. The papers are *falsos*, of course, but they look real. It is more expensive to get the papers, so I went in a truck. My brothers and I hid in crates in the back."

"So what was it like?"

"Scary. I was afraid of getting caught and being punished by *la policía*, or *la migra*. It took many, many days to make the drive, and we had to stay in the crates except for at night. We would come out long enough to use the bathroom and eat a small meal. I got so sore laying in that crate, my body would hurt from not moving. I felt as though I couldn't breathe. It was like being in a... how do you say, a coffin. Like I was going to die. I just had to keep thinking of my wife, and my baby that would soon be born. I knew they needed me to go and make money to take care of them. There are no jobs for all the men in Oaxaca, and we cannot survive without money. My only choice was to come here, to the United States, and leave Guadalupe behind."

Mark was silent. He didn't know what to say. Juan continued to speak.

"When Elidio crossed, he brought Silvia and Chui with him. The trip was hard on Chui and he got very sick. He was bitten by some animal... a snake or a bug, I am not sure what it was, but he had a terrible fever. When they arrived in the United States the *coyote* took them to a special doctor... the kind that does not work in clinics or hospitals. He only sees people on the border that get sick like Chui did. Perhaps he is not a real doctor, I do not know, but he has the right medicines. He gets them from Mexico, where you do not have to have... how do you say? A doctor's note, a prescription to buy the medications. You can get lot of things... penicillin, pills or shots, sometimes the women get the *pastillas*, the birth control pills in Mexico... things that you have to see the doctor for here. The doctor had the right medicine to make him well, but it cost Elidio everything he had. No more money... all gone to the *coyote*. He and Silvia and Chui hitchhiked their way here to North Carolina to live with my brothers and I until they could get their own home. Elidio works with us in painting, he makes good money. He finally bought a trailer for his family. They have done well for themselves."

Mark was humbled. He suddenly began to think about all of the things that he took for granted: his job, his home, his citizenship... and having his wife and children close to him. He felt as if he should say something, he just didn't know what.

"Wow," he finally said, and felt foolish for not having thought of anything better to say. "I just don't know what to say, Juan. That is an amazing story... what you and your brothers and Elidio and his family have gone through to get here." He shook his head in amazement.

Juan pointed to the closet in his room. "My shirt is in there," he said. "And in the pocket is a picture of my baby, my Yolanda. Will you take it out for me?"

Mark did as Juan asked. He opened the closet door and retrieved the shirt. It smelled of sweat and dried paint, and was stained with dirt from Juan's fall. As Juan had said, there was a tiny picture in the front of a baby girl. She was wearing a fancy red satin dress with a crinoline skirt underneath, making it flare out and surround the small baby in the picture. She had a little red bow in her thick, shiny black hair. Her eyes were squinting and she was smiling a gummy, crooked smile. She was precious.

Mark handed the picture to Juan.

JUAN'S STORY

He kissed the picture and placed it over his chest. “*Mi corazón.*” He said softly. *My heart.* “I miss my home. I miss my wife and baby.”

They were both quiet for a long, long time.

“Do you have a wife too? And children?” Juan asked Mark.

“I do. My wife’s name is Jan, and my kids are named Tiffany and Sean. A girl and a boy, six and four.”

“And they are at home right now?”

“Yes.”

Juan smiled. “*Pues,* go home Mark... go see your wife and children. It has been a long day, it is almost night. Go to your *familia.*”

Mark nodded. “Okay, Juan. That I will.” He rose out of his chair.

“My nurse says I may be going home tomorrow.”

“Really? That’s great news. I want to see you before you leave here. I will come visit again tomorrow, okay?”

“*Bueno.* Tomorrow I see you here.”

Mark clasped Juan’s hand in a friendly handshake before he left.

“You have a good night, Juan. Enjoy your dinner and get some good rest.”

“I will.”

Mark pressed the “down” button to call the elevator. The doors opened a moment later, and out came Juan’s brothers, as well as Elidio, Silvia, and Chui. They were on their way to visit him one last time for the day.

On the way into the elevator, Mark passed by Chui. “Hola Chui!” he said. He held out his hand with his palm facing up. “High five?” he asked. Chui giggled and threw his hand up to slap his palm on Mark’s. Mark then ruffled his hair, and smiled and nodded at Silvia and Elidio. They smiled back at Mark and waved as the elevator doors closed.

Review Questions:

- 1) Which of the following statements are true?
 - a) Illnesses are seen as either hot or cold in Juan’s culture
 - b) Pregnancy and certain surgeries are “hot” conditions in Juan’s culture
 - c) When a person is sick with a “cold” condition, they should eat hot foods, and should eat cold foods when they have a “hot” condition to maintain balance.
 - d) All of the above

- 2) Which of the following statements are true?
 - a) Many medications that are only dispensed with a doctor’s prescription in the United States can be obtained in Mexico without prescriptions
 - b) *Coyote* is a slang word for a border guard or policeman
 - c) It is fairly easy, safe, and inexpensive to cross the United States/Mexico border
 - d) The evil eye can be prevented by making the sign of the cross

Chapter

7

Juan's visitors poured into his room, just as he was beginning to eat his dinner. They filled every chair and bit of floor space that there was in the room. José had a large black bag with him, which he sat on the corner of Juan's bed. He pulled a guitar out of it. He sat on the corner of Juan's bed and began to softly play a song. Everyone in the room was smiling and looking on as he strummed the guitar.

He began to sing a traditional Mexican song, *Piel Canela*. During the chorus, everyone joined in and sang softly to Juan.

"Me importas tu, y tu, y tu, y solamente tu, y tu, y tu... nadie mas de tu, y tu, y tu... me importas tu... *What's important to me is you, and you, and you... and only you, and you, and you... nobody else but you, and you, and you... what's important to me is you.*"

The patient care staff heard the music from outside of Juan's door, and crowded around the doorway to hear the singing.

"That's so sweet," one of them whispered.

"What are they saying?" asked another

"The song is just beautiful!" declared another.

A moment later, a patient in a nearby room stuck her head out of the door. She was smiling. "Where's the singing and the guitar-playing coming from?" she asked.

A nurse put her in a wheelchair and brought her to Juan's door. "You can listen," she said.

Another patient shouted from his room, "I'd like to hear it, too!"

In only moments, the entire nursing unit stood in the doorway of Juan's room, listening to the music, humming along, and watching the family. José looked up and was happy to see the audience. Juan waved his hand to motion them inside. Several of the people from the hall squeezed into his room, as many as could fit.

There were excited murmurs around the room as the song ended.

"Play another song!"

"Can you teach us the words in Spanish?"

"We want to hear more!"

José was flattered by his audience. "I'm going to sing a song called 'De Colores.' It's a song about the beautiful colors in the springtime. I think that you all will like it."

José began to sing, and his brothers joined in. Elidio and Silvia sang too, and Chui sang the few words he knew.

Y por eso, los grandes amores, de todos colores, me gustan a mí
¡Y por eso, los grandes amores, de todos colores, me gustan a mí!

And because of that, the great love of all colors, are pleasing to me!

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When the song ended, there was thunderous applause in Juan's tiny room. Everyone thanked José for the entertainment. Some of the people wished Juan well as they stepped out of the room.

Juan grinned. "Gracias, hermano," he said to José. "That was fun." It had brought back lots of memories from living in Oaxaca. Juan closed his eyes and thought about the carefree afternoons when he and his family and friends would gather and sing songs until the sun went down, watch the children playing silly made-up games, and give thanks to God for another day with *comida, buena salud, y familia* – food, good health, and family.

Juan's family packed up the guitar and left him to finish his dinner and get some rest. They were excited to know that Juan only had to stay for one more night and would be coming back home the following day.

As Juan finished the last of his tortillas –which had cooled off enough to eat – he turned on the television and found an all Spanish channel. They were showing a *telenovela* – which Juan really liked. Most everyone that he knew liked the telenovelas, Spanish-language soap operas. This particular *telenovela* was about a wealthy man with five beautiful daughters. The daughters were always getting into trouble all of the time, and were pursued by many men for their good looks and money... *Ay*, the romance, the mystery, the adventures, the craziness of it all! It was a good show, and Juan enjoyed watching it before he dozed off to sleep.

Review Question:

- 1) What would some good diversional activities be for a patient from Juan's culture?
 - a) Visiting with family
 - b) Singing folk songs and playing instruments such as the guitar
 - c) Watching Spanish programs on the television
 - d) All of the above

Chapter

8

Juan awoke in the morning to Mark's smiling face. "Hola, amigo! Today's your big day. Are you excited?"

Juan stretched and let out a big yawn. "Sí... I can't wait to go home."

Liz came into Juan's room and looked at the IV in his arm. "Time to take that out," she said, as she peeled up the tape and skillfully removed the catheter. "We also need to get you up for a little more walking. How does that sound?"

Juan nodded. "Okay."

Mark bent down to pick up Juan's slippers and helped place them on his feet. "I'll give you a hand if you like," he said.

In a few moments, Juan was taking slow, steady steps in the hallway. "Feels better to walk now... my best day yet!" he said to Liz and Mark, who walked with him at each side.

Back in his room, Liz helped him ease back onto a sitting position on the corner of his bed. "Now you can take off the gown and get dressed in your own clothes again."

Juan smiled. "My brothers brought some clean clothes from home. They are in my closet."

"Great! I'll get them." Liz went to the closet and removed a small duffel bag. She unzipped it and pulled out a pair of Juan's jeans and T-shirt. She set them on a chair in the room and pulled a curtain shut around the bed.

Juan was shocked when Liz did not leave the room.

She picked up the clothes off of the chair and set them on the corner of the bed. "Let me help you out here. That gown can be hard to take off, so I'll give you a hand."

Juan seemed hesitant. "Well...I think I can get it okay."

Mark stepped up to the bed. "Hey Liz, I can give him a hand. Don't worry about it."

Liz looked at both men. "Well, okay, if you don't mind, Mark."

"No problem at all. I know you've got some charting to do, so go ahead and I'll help Juan out."

Liz left the room, and Juan looked relieved.

"So, can I give you a hand with getting that gown off?" Mark stood up to assist Juan, who seemed much more relaxed to receive his help.

"Thank you," said Juan.

Mark had done some more studying of his notes the night before and he had come across a concept described as *machismo*. Men in the Hispanic culture liked to think of themselves as *macho*, which was associated with pride in being the provider and the head of the family, and in being a strong person – physically, emotionally, and mentally. He realized that when men were sick, their *machismo* was threatened.

Thus, Juan was already in a very vulnerable state. Mark imagined how hard it must be to be confined to a hospital bed, tired and in pain, while thinking about a family back home and worrying about how to provide for them while away from work. He then realized that since *machismo* was a male

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ideal, Juan would probably prefer to have male caregivers during moments of weakness or vulnerability. With Juan having to undress and be nude for a short while, Mark felt like it would be easier for him to do it in front of another man as opposed to a woman. Plus, exposing his incision site – which caused him pain and weakness – might have felt embarrassing or awkward in front of a woman. Mark was glad that he was in the room and able to help Juan at that time. Helping to preserve his dignity and *machismo* would surely help to speed up his recovery!

Just as Juan finished dressing, there was a knock at the door. Juan's doctor entered to examine him one last time and prepare him for discharge.

Review Questions:

- 1) *Machismo* refers to:
 - a) The pride in being the provider and the head of the family
 - b) Suppressing weakness and vulnerability
 - c) Being physically, mentally, and emotionally strong
 - d) All of the above

- 2) Juan probably didn't want Liz to help him change his clothes because
 - a) Being nude would put him in a vulnerable state
 - b) Exposing his incision site would show a vulnerability
 - c) It would be un-*macho* to accept help from a woman
 - d) All of the above

Chapter
9

Liz rolled a wheelchair into Juan's room. "Before we go, I have some things to teach you about how to care for your incision. Liz sat down in a chair facing Juan and presented a sheet to him that was written in Spanish. "This is a patient instruction sheet for you. I have an English copy that I'm going to read from, and here's one for you in Spanish."

Liz began to teach Juan about taking care of himself at home and what he would need to do in order to heal from his surgery. She told him about his medications, his diet, and caring for the surgical incision. She asked him to repeat back some of the things that she had taught him in order to make sure that he understood. And it was a good thing that she did, because she found that Juan was having a hard time understanding a few things. Liz would frequently ask "Do you understand?" and although Juan would nod his head yes, he would not be able to explain things back to Liz when she asked him to.

Mark was in the room during Juan's teaching and again recognized this as Juan's respect for the Liz's position as a nurse. Being agreeable and polite seemed to be Juan's way of showing respect for people that were authority figures. Mark was glad that Liz was taking the time to really make sure that Juan understood his patient teaching, and when he didn't she would go back over the important points until Juan really 'got it.' Mark knew that patient education was a good part of patient care anyway, but he knew how critically important it was for Juan to get this information because of something that he remembered from his research. Most immigrants from Mexico had only a sixth grade education or less, making it difficult for them to read many of the patient education sheets that the hospital gave out – even in Spanish. Thus, it was crucial for Juan to really learn about how to take care of himself and have all of his questions answered before he left the hospital.

Juan was delighted to see Carlos and Lazaro stroll through his door toward the end of Liz's discharge teaching. She helped get Juan into the wheelchair and introduced them to Judy, a volunteer of the hospital that would take Juan out of the hospital to be discharged.

Mark accompanied Juan down to the car, a new luxury sedan. José was waiting behind the wheel with the engine running. "Our boss let us borrow his car to get Juan home," he said proudly.

Juan laughed outloud. "And this is what I have to go through to get a ride in the boss's new car?"

Mark grasped Juan's arm at the elbow and helped him get comfortable in the back seat. Before he let go, he grasped Juan's hand in a sturdy handshake.

Juan looked at his friend admiringly. "Thank for you so much, Mark."

"I've enjoyed getting to know you, Juan."

Juan nodded. "When I am able to travel, I am going back to Oaxaca, to see my wife and my baby."

Mark looked surprised. "Really? And are you coming back?"

"I hope so... one day soon. I want to bring Guadalupe and Yolanda back with me, this is a good place to live. There are good people here. I really don't want to leave such a good job, like I

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have now, but I trust that the saints will find a way to bring me back. I am very happy here in the United States.”

“What if you can’t come back? You said that there is not enough work for all the men in Oaxaca, didn’t you?”

Juan nodded. “This is true, and I do not know if I will be able to find a job in Mexico or not. But I will trust the saints. If I pray often and live a good life, they will show me the way, and they will help me provide for my family.”

Mark nodded. “You have tremendous faith, Juan,” he said. “I believe that it will help you to get where you must go, and do what you must do.”

He broke his hand free of Mark’s grasp and placed it over his chest. “*Mi familia es mi corazón.*” *My family is my heart.* “I need to see them again, I have been away for too long. The saints in heaven spared my life, so I must go and share it with the ones that I love.”

Mark smiled. “Well then good luck. If you ever come back here, you know where to find me.”

“*Gracias, mi amigo.*”

Mark shut the door for Juan. They both raised their hands and waved a final good-bye as the car rolled away.

Review Question:

- 1) Mark was glad that Liz was doing good patient teaching because:
 - a) Many people from Juan’s country did not read at a grade level higher than 6th grade, so Juan may not have been able to read his patient instruction sheet very well at home.
 - b) Juan would often say that he understood, when he really didn’t
 - c) Doing good patient education is part of good patient care anyway
 - d) All of the above

Chapter 10

Three months later, Mark was busily dashing from room to room in the Emergency Department, caring for patients.

“Hey Mark,” cried Lee, the secretary, “You’ve got a visitor.”

Mark excused himself from his patient and walked over to the nurse’s station. Waiting for him was Juan’s brother, Lazaro. Mark shook his hand. “Hello! How is your brother doing?”

Lazaro nodded a friendly greeting. “Juan, he’s much better. He’s in Oaxaca with his wife and the baby. I stopped by the hospital to make a payment to his bill. While I am here, I have something to give you. He mailed me this note, and he asked me to bring it to you.” Lazaro handed Mark a small envelope, with Mark’s name written on the front.

During his lunch break, Mark sat down in the cafeteria and pulled the envelope out of his pocket. The first thing that he saw was a photo of Juan and a beautiful baby in his arms. On the back of the photo was written: “My wife took this picture for you. *Juan y Yolanda.*” Behind the picture was a brief note. It read:

Estimado Mark,

Please forgive me if my English fails me as I write this letter. I am back in Oaxaca for a long time, and I am afraid I am forgetting already. I want to thank you again for being my friend, during my time that I stay in your hospital. I have healed very well, my belly is closed, and the scar, it is not bad.

I must tell you about a song that we sing in Oaxaca, called *De Colores*. In the song we sing about all of the many colors, of the fields in the springtime, and the birds, and all the things that make the earth beautiful. But what I wish to say is that *la gente*, the people, are just like the colors. We are all very different, in the way that we live, and the languages we speak, and the foods we eat, and the things that we believe. But the colors come together to make a beautiful springtime, and the differences of the people are what make the world beautiful. Do you understand what I say? You are a good friend and I will forever thank you.

Y por eso, los grandes amores de todos colores, me gustan a mí.

Tu amigo,
Juan Fuentes Cerrano



Review Question Answers

Please check your responses to the review questions with the following answers:

Chapter 1

- 1) b
- 2) c

Chapter 2

- 1) d
- 2) d

Chapter 3

- 1) b
- 2) d

Chapter 4

- 1) b
- 2) d

Chapter 5

- 1) c

Chapter 6

- 1) d
- 2) a

Chapter 7

- a) d

Chapter 8

- 1) d
- 2) d

Chapter 9

- 1) d

JUAN'S STORY

A moment of reflection...

What was the most valuable lesson you learned from Juan's Story?

What can you do differently now in caring for patients and families based on what you have learned from Juan's Story?