

TRANSCRIPT Vignette 1 Limited English Proficiency

Narrator:

As you watch the following vignettes, remember that each one represents an individual case and shouldn't be taken as a generalized rule for encounters between the various cultural groups. In fact, that's a key point: the difference between generalization and stereotype. A generalization is a starting point from which the physician can go on to more accurately understand the individual needs of a patient. A stereotype, on the other hand, is a stopping point, a restrictive schema that is assumed to represent everything important about a person.

In the following scenario, a physician is interviewing a new patient who speaks little English. Note how the physician uses the tools of multicultural communication to deal respectfully with the patient's cultural differences and build rapport and trust to help provide culturally and linguistically responsive care.

Physician: Hello, buenos tardes, cómo está usted?

Patient: [Replying in Spanish] Oh, usted hablas el españole, Doctor?

Physician: No, I am sorry, that's the only Spanish I know. Would you be more

comfortable with an interpreter? There's someone here who can

help us.

Patient: [Replying in Spanish] Por favor...

Resource: Excerpt from Quality Care for Diverse Populations, *Vignette 1—Limited English Proficiency* video provided by the American Academy of Family Physicians.



Narrator:

Clear understating is crucial for both the physician and the patient, so the physician can be sure he understands the patient's medical, emotional, and socio-cultural needs and the patient can be sure she knows what the physician wants her to do.

This makes the interpreter a key person in the interview process. It is the interpreter as much as the physician who must establish a trusting relationship with the patient. The interpreter must be empathetic, but must also have adequate training and experience to deal with health- related terminology. In this case, the physician's office works with a community language bank and a contracted Spanish-speaking interpreter who has been trained so that the physician is confident his instructions are being accurately relayed. This is one of the methods recommended by the Office for Civil Rights in its August 30, 2000 policy guidance for caring for people with limited English proficiency.

Let's continue with this office visit. The interpreter has arrived and been introduced to the patient. The physician has established that the patient emigrated from Central America to the United States about a year ago and is working part-time in a clothing factory. Her last menstrual period was three months ago. Now, the physician turns his attention to the psycho-social context of the visit.

Physician: So, tell me what's going on in your life?

Interpreter: [Translating to Spanish]

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] I am almost sure I am pregnant.

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]



Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] I am not married yet but we expect to

be married.

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] I haven't told him that I'm pregnant.

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] But I don't know how to tell him; I am

not sure how he'll react.

Physician: And how do you feel about that?

Interpreter: [Translating to Spanish]

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] Well, honestly, I am a bit afraid.

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] I am not sure that we're ready for the

responsibility of having children.

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] But my religion forbids abortion.



Narrator: The physician has been using an interviewing mnemonic called

BATHE, which helps elicit the information the physician needs to establish the patient's psycho-social context and to develop a rapport with the patient. The physician started by seeking background information, and then asked how the situation will affect the patient. He then asks what troubles the patient, and tries to get a feel of how the patient is handling it. Finally, the physician offers the patient empathy to let her know that she is not alone and that someone cares about her.

BATHE

Background

Affect

Trouble

Handling

Empathy

Physician: What about this situation troubles you the most?

Interpreter: [Translating to Spanish]

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] My boyfriend smokes.

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] He likes to drink wine.

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]



Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] And generally he likes me to drink with

him.

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] And I don't know if that's safe.

Physician: Well, you're right to be concerned about that. And we'll talk about

that in a minute.

Interpreter: [Translating to Spanish]

Physician: Is there anything else troubling you?

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] I am not sure if I am doing the right

things for the health of the baby.

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] Recently, I ate some strawberries.

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] And my grandmother told me that that

could cause the baby to have red birthmarks.

Physician: And how are you handling that?

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] I'm going more frequently to church.



Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] And I'm praying for strength and

direction.

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] I also have visited my sister and my

friends.

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] When I feel depressed.

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] Or under stress.

Physician: I can understand that the situation must be very difficult for you.

Interpreter: [Translating to Spanish]

Patient: [nods her head]

Narrator: By using the BATHE mnemonic, the physician gained a better

understanding of the psycho-social context of his patient's life and

is developing a relationship of trust with the patient.

Physician: Now, remember, for the next few months, I need you to stay

focused on keeping yourself healthy, because that's the best way

to keep your baby healthy too.

Interpreter: [Translating to Spanish]



Physician: That means staying away from alcohol.

Interpreter: [Translating to Spanish]

Physician: No drinking wine with your boyfriend.

Interpreter: [Translating to Spanish]

Physician: And you need to lay down the law about smoking, because that's

the best way to keep yourself and your baby healthy.

Interpreter: [Translating to Spanish]

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] I know that you're right doctor, but I

don't know if my boyfriend will do what I ask him to.

Physician: Well, if you think it would help for me to give your boyfriend the

facts, I'd be happy to talk him.

Interpreter: [Translating to Spanish]

Patient: Gracias doctor.

[Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] Yes, doctor and what about my

grandmother?

Patient: [Replying in Spanish]

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] Is it true that the baby will have red

birthmarks if I eat strawberries?



Physician: No, no, it is not true.

Interpreter: [Translating to Spanish]

Physician: It is understandable for people to think like that.

Interpreter: [Translating to Spanish]

Physician: Because it is natural for a baby to be born with temporary red

marks on their skin.

Interpreter: [Translating to Spanish]

Physician: It's just a part of the birth process.

Interpreter: [Translating to Spanish]

Physician: If you'd like for me to talk with your grandmother, I'd be happy to.

Interpreter: [Translating to Spanish]

Physician: After all, your family plays an important role in your health and in

your baby's.

Interpreter: [Translating to Spanish]

Patient: Gracias.

Interpreter: [Translating from Spanish] Thank you.



Narrator:

Open communication is the key to a productive physician-patient relationship, and when there's a language barrier, that just adds another cultural factor that can get in the way. Patience is crucial for the physician because the process of cross-cultural communication takes time. The need for an interpreter adds another layer of time and effort, but the results are well worth it.