

8. Health Bars

After her policeman boyfriend severely beat her, Mariana de la Torre left her three young children in the care of an aunt, and came to the United States hidden in the trunk of a car. She bought a stolen identity and social security number and found a job.

When Ms. de la Torre was diagnosed with advanced cervical cancer, she initially did not seek treatment because she could not afford to pay. As her symptoms became severe, she obtained care at several Illinois hospitals using the stolen identity. Trinity Hospital in Moline absorbed \$317,000 for her treatment; Medicaid covered \$106,000; and both the University of Chicago Medical Center and St. Francis Medical Center in Peoria provided additional treatment before the fraud was discovered. Trinity Hospital officials admitted they didn't know if she would have received the same level of treatment if they had known she was using a false identity. According to the March 15, 2009 Chicago Tribune, de Torre "didn't think to do harm to anyone; I only wanted the pain to end".

De Torre's supporters defend her actions as the exercise of a fundamental human right to preserve her life and care for her children. Her detractors charge that her calculated fraud was not justifiable, even in an inequitable healthcare system.