

Doctor describes importance of interpretation in patient care

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(HealthDay)—Understanding patients is important for all doctors, including those working with patients with limited English proficiency, according to an article published in the September/October issue of the *Annals of Family Medicine*.

Based on his experience working with predominantly Spanish-speaking patients, Benjamin P. Brown, M.D., from the University of Chicago Medical Center, discusses the importance of interpretation in caring for patients with limited English proficiency.

The author notes that Spanish-speaking patients are frequently relieved to be treated by a doctor who can understand them. The difficulties with not being understood and not understanding are not limited to the clinic. Difficulties also include finding the way around the hospital, scheduling appointments, and locating all the necessary Medicare papers. Some

patients may be undocumented and consequently living in fear of arrest and deportation. The importance of understanding patients is not limited to being able to understand their language, but has a broader scope, whereby a doctor can elicit the patient's fears and struggles and provide assistance to new immigrants.

"Working with a predominantly Spanish-speaking population, both as a [medical student](#) and now as a resident, reminds me of the [importance](#) of understanding patients," the author writes. "Through practice and compassion, good physicians find ways to forge a common language with patients of disparate backgrounds: to become a doctor, then, is also to become an interpreter."

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