

Medical Interpreters and Hospital Care

An interpreter has a unique job. This person knows more than one language. An interpreter's job is to help people communicate when they do not speak the same language. There are special kinds of interpreters who work in hospitals, called medical interpreters, and they help doctors and patients understand each other when they don't speak the same language.

Before medical interpreters worked in hospitals, it was hard for doctors to speak to some patients. Sometimes a family member or a friend of the patient would know the same language as the doctor. But there are many difficult words in medicine that few people know. This can make it hard for a doctor to treat a patient. If a doctor cannot understand a patient, it is hard for the doctor to **conceive** of what is wrong with the patient. Doctors came to the **realization** that they would need help speaking to their patients. So they hired medical interpreters.

Medical interpreters have to learn a lot of medical words. They must learn the words for illnesses and the parts of the body in different languages. When the doctor asks a question, the medical interpreter changes the question to the language that the patient understands. When the patient answers in his or her language, the medical interpreter changes this answer back to the language that the doctor understands. It is the interpreter's job to get the meaning right. He or she needs to focus and **concentrate** so that the **interpretation** is correct. For doctors and nurses to do their jobs correctly, they cannot work with **conjectures**, or guesses. They must have facts. When medical interpreters correctly tell doctors what patients say, doctors and nurses are more likely to **deduce** what steps will lead to a cure.

Medical interpreters must have a good understanding of basic medical **concepts**. Sometimes a patient cannot understand why he or she is ill. A medical interpreter can help patients **picture** what caused the illness.

Medical interpreters act as part of a team with doctors and nurses. When everyone on the team works together, they can help patients who are sick, no matter what language they speak.

COMPREHENSION Why do doctors need medical interpreters? Which words tell you how interpreters help patients and doctors?



The Grocery List

The twins, Sydney and Nick, were watching television when their mother came into the room. "Kids," she said, "I need you to run to the corner grocery store for me."

"Can we go when our show is over?" they begged.

"OK," their mother told them. "But listen closely. I need a bunch of flowers, a box of cream cheese, and a jar of thyme. The herb thyme. It's a spice. Have you got that?" she asked.

"Yes!" the twins answered, though they were barely paying attention. From their **viewpoint**, their television show was much more important than some shopping list.

When their show finally ended, the twins walked to the store. "So," Nick said, "do you remember what Mom needs?"

Sydney looked surprised. "I thought you were listening!" she replied. She tried to recall a **mental** image, but her mind was blank. "Didn't Mom say she needed some flour?"

Nick nodded. "Yea, that sounds familiar!" he agreed. They ran to get a bag of flour. Then they tried to recall what else they were supposed to buy. Nick's memory was foggy, but he recalled hearing the word *cheese*. "Mom always buys cheddar cheese," Nick said. "I'm sure that's what she needs." They ran to get a block of cheddar cheese.

"There was one other thing we were supposed to get," said Sydney. "Oh! Mom asked us to buy her more time."

"But that doesn't make any sense," Nick said. "There's no **logic** to that." He could only draw one possible **conclusion**. "Mom always complains that she never has a chance to get everything done," he said. "That must be what Mom meant when she said she needed more time," Nick **reasoned**.

Sydney agreed. "Then I guess we're done shopping," she said.

They paid for their groceries and carried them home from the store. But when their mother saw what they had bought, she groaned. "Kids," she told them, "I needed a bunch of flowers and a box of cream cheese, not a bag of flour and a block of cheddar cheese. And where's my jar of thyme?"

"Oh," said Sydney. "Do you mean the herb thyme?"

"Of course!" said their mother. "The spice!"

The twins looked embarrassed. "I think we were **brainwashed** earlier," they cried. "Television took over our minds and ruined our **comprehension**! But we promise we'll bring home the correct things this time!" And they ran back out to the grocery store.

COMPREHENSION Using words from the story, explain how Sydney and Nick try to remember their mother's grocery list. How would this story be different if Sydney and Nick had listened attentively to their mother from the beginning?

