
Prologue

You can do this! In fact, if you live and work almost anywhere in the United States, then you *must* learn at least elemental Spanish in order to communicate effectively with all of your patients. Currently, Hispanics with limited English proficiency (LEP) make up as much as 20 percent of the patient population in the United States. The ability to effectively communicate with these patients and their significant others is crucial for health care professionals' effective contributions to the health care delivery system and practice success.

I take a bold approach to learning what I call elemental Spanish—forget all (or most) the rules of grammar, linguistics, spelling and syntax. You are training to communicate with your Spanish-speaking patients—not to become a Spanish linguist.

This book presents a novel but simple approach to mastering elemental and basic conversational Spanish through incorporating a blend of English and Spanish. This dialect, commonly known as Spanglish, is frowned on by linguistic purists, but is the principal mode of communication between most English-speaking health care professionals and LEP patients and their significant others. Through early introduction of basic words and phrases through multiple drills and mastery of key health-related words, readers learn confidence in vital communications with their Spanish-speaking patients and clients. When you don't know certain words in Spanish in a sentence, try filling in the blanks with English. It is analogous to bricks and mortar. The theme throughout the book is "It really is as easy as it sounds!"

There are seven chapters in the book. Chapter 1, *Why Learn Spanish?*, addresses demographics, sociocultural considerations, and Spanish dialects throughout the world. Chapter 2, *You Are Not Trying to Become a Spanish Linguist*, looks at acceptable modes of interpersonal communication in general and the crucial nature of health care

professional-patient communications in particular. The chapter also addresses the fundamentals of patient care documentation. Chapter 3, *You Already Know a Lot of Spanish*, includes a self-assessment quiz about how much basic Spanish one already knows and how to choose and use a Spanish-English dictionary in clinical practice. Chapter 4, *The Basics*, compares English and Spanish linguistics and phonetics, differentiates formalities and tenses in English and Spanish, explores comparative grammar and pronunciation, and provides basic communicative Spanish words and phrases. Chapter 5, *The Medical Nitty-Gritty—You Can Do This!*, covers clinical care activities such as patient intake, medical and social history taking, and the physical examination. Chapter 6, *Focus on Rehabilitation*, addresses focused topics like pain questions, special tests and measurements, gait analysis, therapeutic exercise, manual therapy techniques, and modalities. Chapter 7, *Special Considerations*, deals with translators, medical abbreviations, and techniques for effective communication with Hispanic patients and their significant others.

Features of each chapter include: bilingual vocabulary lists, practice drills, and patient-health care professional encounter scenarios. Each chapter is structured with a chapter abstract, multiple objectives, a summary, and end-of-chapter discussion questions. Three appendices include a quick guide made up of vital basic words and phrases for effective HCP-patient communications, and English-Spanish versions of a patient bill of rights and duties and a HIPAA privacy statement.

The book is intended for clinical health care professionals at all levels. The materials have been field-tested in a variety of clinical and in-service presentation scenarios.

Best wishes for continued practice success and service to patients!