

# Quickly, quickly, I feel sickly

## LINKS TO:

Stage 3, Module 7

Learning Object 2: *Where do we start?*

## Exercise 1

Sample answers:

### 1.1 Have you ever been sick? What did your friends or family do to support you while you were sick? What kinds of gifts did they bring to you, or send to you?

Once, when I was about 12 years old, I was in hospital to have my appendix out. Either my mum or dad was with me at all times, except when I was in surgery. They brought me games to play, messages from the rest of my family, and my favourite old teddy bear to sit on my bed. My classmates sent me cards and messages, including a bunch of helium balloons with get well messages. When I got home from the hospital, my mum set me up on the lounge with a pillow and a doona, and let me watch movies, listen to music, and nap on and off all day.

### 1.2 Have you been to visit someone in an Australian hospital? Write about what you did when you went to see them.

Once we went to visit my aunt after she had a baby. We went in the afternoon. Aunt Helen had had a baby girl, so my mother took her flowers tied up in a big pink bow, and a gift of brand new pink and white baby clothes. On the way to visit Aunt Helen, Mum told us we needed to be quiet and polite. We all had to wash our hands before entering the hospital ward. After we arrived, a nurse brought the new baby from the nursery. Mum held her for a little while, and then each of us had a turn holding her. When my dad held the baby, she started crying and everyone laughed.

### 1.3 Based on your prior understanding, or after doing some research, describe a typical Australian nursing home or other aged-care facility.

My grandfather lives in an aged-care facility. He has his own room, with a small ensuite bathroom. His bed is a hospital bed that can be raised and lowered, and the visitor's chairs are plastic. There are special rails in the shower and near the toilet for him to support himself. There is a big red button he can push if he needs someone to come and help him.

There are lots of people on staff, including nurses, cleaners, doctors, cooks, administration staff, a librarian and activities coordinators. My grandfather eats most of his meals in a big dining hall with everyone else. If he is unwell, his meals are delivered to his room.

My grandfather often has books in his room from the library, and he participates in some of the organised activities and outings. He particularly likes the 'men's shed', where the men go to make things out of wood; the chess club; and outings to the movies.

I think my grandfather's experience is fairly typical, although I understand that some facilities have more activities than others. Facilities for elderly people who are more unwell, or are suffering dementia, are often quite different, with patients being cared for more like hospital patients, in shared rooms, with less privacy and autonomy.

#### 1.4 What values, attitudes and beliefs inform the ways Australians care for people who are unwell, particularly the aged? Give reasons to support your answer.

I think that the Medicare system in Australia, which ensures that everyone has access to medical care, shows that we value good health, and believe that the provision of free or cheap, accessible health care is a priority for all Australians.

When someone close to us is unwell, most Australians will show that they care by providing emotional and practical support. While medical professionals are often relied on to provide treatment for illness or disability, most Australians believe it is the role of family and friends to provide personal support, by ensuring the patient is comfortable, by helping them communicate with medical staff, or by bringing them gifts, flowers, cards or personal belongings.

In Australia, many aged people are cared for at home by their families, which reflects the importance that Australians place on family, and on providing loving home-based care for those who are unwell.

There is also a range of options for live-in care, such as nursing homes. Aged-care facilities such as these are highly scrutinised, with an expectation that they will provide a high quality of care and a high quality of life, including opportunities for residents to engage with their families and friends.

The diversity of options available for care of the elderly who are unwell in Australia demonstrates the value Australians place on having a range of options available to suit a variety of wants and needs. The difference in the costs of these options reflects the value we place on having options available to people of limited means, as well as the idea that those who can afford more luxurious accommodation and services should be able to secure them.

## Exercise 2

Sample answers:

### 2.1 When a person in Indonesia is sick, what kinds of gifts or messages do their friends and family send? Are there particular things they would usually do for the sick person?

In Indonesia, when a person is sick and is cared for at home, it is common for family and friends to bring them food. Sometimes, they will also give money to the family who is caring for the sick person to help with the cost of treatment. If the sick person is *sakit parah* and is hospitalised, visitors usually bring flowers and fresh fruit, especially *jeruk*, as these are thought to be very efficacious. They will also bring meals for the patient, during *jam Besuch*, if it is permitted.

### 2.2 If someone was hospitalised in Indonesia, how would their friends and family support them?

Apart from visiting and bringing gifts, family and friends of someone who is hospitalised, especially if that person is very young or elderly, can show support by staying at their bedside to help them. Especially in public hospitals, family members can help take the patients, if they are allowed, for a walk along the corridor or to the gardens for some fresh air. Many Indonesian hospitals are single-level facilities, with the various buildings connected by open-air covered walkways and well-maintained gardens, giving a positive and refreshing ambience for patients.

In many hospitals family members are often required to provide some kind of proof that they are able to pay for treatment at that hospital before the patient is admitted. Family members may also be asked to find certain medication that is not available or is very expensive and not generally used in that hospital.

As in Australian hospitals, Indonesian hospitals also have a mortuary. Unlike Australian hospitals, however, when a patient dies in an Indonesian hospital, family and friends will organise for the body to be sent home as soon as possible for burial preparation. Muslims in particular are required to bury their deceased within 24 hours. There are no funeral homes in Indonesia, so preparation is usually done in the home of the deceased.

**2.3 Write about the typical arrangements for aged care in Indonesia. In what ways are these arrangements in Indonesia similar to, or different from, those in Australia? Give reasons for your answer.**

In Indonesia, typically, the elderly (*manula*) are cared for by their family. It is common for an elderly parent to live with a daughter and her family, with no expectation for them to contribute financially to the family. The elderly in Indonesia prefer not to stay in *rumah jompo*, not only because the conditions and facilities are not very well developed, but also because of the belief that people who live in *rumah jompo* are not wanted any more by their family. Indonesians believe that, while someone still has a family, they should not be cared for in a *rumah jompo*.

These arrangements are very different from those in Australia, where being cared for in a nursing home or aged-care facility is socially quite acceptable, and the facilities are well resourced with many different services. In Australia, people want to go to a retirement home or a nursing home not only because they can be looked after by professional carers but also because they are able to take part in many activities that stimulate their minds and bodies. Many elderly in Australia prefer not to be a 'burden' and live with their family, instead preferring to retain some independence. Living in a retirement home can give them that while being looked after at the same time.

**2.4 What values, attitudes and beliefs inform the ways Indonesian people care for those who are unwell, especially the elderly. Give reasons to support your answer.**

From a practical point of view, I think Indonesians look after those who are unwell the way they do because of the limited access to good healthcare facilities. I also think that Indonesians value family relationships and place much importance on the role of family in looking after the sick and the elderly. It seems that Indonesians are prepared to give a lot to their family and it appears that their family is also prepared to be there for them in times of need. In Indonesia, the majority of old people are cared for at home by their families. While there are old people who stay in *rumah jompo*, the number of families who care for their elderly relatives shows that the young believe that it is their duty to look after their elderly.

### Exercise 3

Sample answers:

**3.1 What similarities and differences are there between the ways Australians and Indonesian people show their affection and concern when their friends or family are unwell?**

I think both Indonesians and Australians have similar ways of showing their affection and concern when their friends and family are unwell.

Both Australians and Indonesians will visit sick friends and relatives either at home or in hospital, and will often take gifts in the form of food. Indonesians are less likely to take flowers. In Indonesia, family members will also offer money as a gift, to help share the cost of caring for the sick person. This is not something that is likely to occur in Australia, unless there are very special circumstances.

**3.2 How do these differences or similarities reflect differences or similarities between Indonesian and Australian cultural values, attitudes and beliefs?**

I think both Indonesians and Australians place an important value on the role of family in caring for people. However, because Australian families have more community and government support than Indonesian families do, a family in Indonesia seems to play a bigger role in caring for the sick and elderly, by staying in hospital with a child or an elderly relative, for example, because they have to. Australians also value the idea of independence and may believe that they will become a 'burden' on their family if they rely on their family for support. I think in Indonesia the elderly do not regard staying with family or relatives as a loss of independence. It is an accepted belief that children will look after their parents, and so, instead, Indonesians are unhappy if they are placed in a *rumah jompo*, because this means that either they have no family or they have been ostracised by them.

## Exercise 4

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**What facilities, activities and services do you think should be made available for people living in an aged-care facility? What rights do you think patients should have?**

Sample answer:

I think that it is important for an aged-care facility to provide a range of activities and services for its patients, so as to cater for a diverse population. I believe that patients should, at a minimum, have access to services such as comfortable sleeping, eating and socialising spaces; access to both private and public space; and access to timely medical care. They should be able to communicate freely with their friends and family using a telephone and the Internet. Ideally, I think an aged-care facility should have both indoor and outdoor spaces that people can enjoy.

I think that people living in an aged-care facility should have the same rights as any human being. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* states that 'Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person'. I believe that elderly people should share in these rights, and that these rights should not be compromised by living in an aged-care facility.

I would consider some of the other rights everyone should have would include the rights to self-determination and self-expression, and the right to make your own choices about how to manage your finances, health and personal relationships. I think elderly people should have the right to be safe and secure. I also think they should have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

I think that people living in an aged-care facility should have the right to make decisions about the level and type of medical intervention that is provided for them. They should be able to make choices about their diet, and about their level of activity and interaction with others. They should be free to spend their money as they wish, and to come and go from the facility as much as they like.

If they need it, they should also have the right to access professional advice about legal and medical matters.