

Ana Lucia Case Study

Ana Lucia is a three-year-old female who is being seen at the border clinic. Her young mother, Flor, accompanies her. Ana Lucia and her extended family just arrived at the border crossing after traveling the 1800-mile journey from Guatemala, walking approximately one third of the trip on footpaths. The child is thin and pale, disheveled, incontinent, and is wearing tattered clothing and ill-fitting shoes. Crying softly, she is lethargic and sometimes irritable. Upon physical examination by the health care team and after laboratory results are obtained, Ana Lucia is determined to be dehydrated and malnourished, with mild iron deficiency anemia, a moderate sunburn, a treatable urinary tract infection, a mild upper respiratory infection, and blisters on her feet and heels. Ana Lucia clings to her mother during the assessment and makes no eye contact or communication with the nurse. She often naps in her mother's arms.

Ana Lucia is transported via ambulance to the nearest hospital for treatment, with her mother. Aggressive physical assessment and interventions occur including intravenous fluids, an indwelling catheter, and several laboratory tests. The child cries and has difficulty settling down after painful procedures such as blood draws and wound care on her feet. She appears to be hungry, sucking on her fingers and pointing at a picture of children picnicking. She samples her food tray when it arrives and eats three bites. She cries and shakes her head, "No." The nurse, who speaks Spanish, reviews a nutritional needs assessment indicating that Ana Lucia is used to eating simple foods to include sopas (soups), caldillo (meat and vegetable stew), and tropical fruits such as papaya and mango. She also enjoys plantain, corn, sweet potato, and black beans.

Ana Lucia's physical condition improves after a few days in the pediatric intensive care unit. However, she continues to cry intermittently and protests when any male caregivers come into the room. Her mother states that she is afraid of "the ghosts in the room" (intercom system and the toilet flushing) and "the waterfall" (shower). She also says that she is afraid when the "monster starts to beep" (IV pump). It is noted when conducting the basic needs assessment that Ana Lucia is used to sleeping on a mat on the floor, surrounded by her 10 family members. It is also discovered that Ana Lucia speaks a dialect with Spanish and Kaqchikel, a Mayan dialect. A professional interpreter is utilized for assessment and instructions are given to her mother regarding Ana Lucia's fearfulness and feelings of isolation. The nurse suggests to Flor that Ana Lucia appears to have

been emotionally traumatized by the journey and is frightened by the newness of her surroundings.

It will be important for the nurse and the mother to create a plan of care to help Ana Lucia recover from her emotional trauma. Flor agrees with the nurse that the journey was very difficult. She reports that they often went for the day without water or food. Flor also reports that strangers sometimes approached the family and offered assistance in return for money or sexual favors. All these concerns affected Ana Lucia during the trip. She was not harmed physically but was deeply frightened daily. Flor also reveals that Ana Lucia was often cold at night in the desert and overheated during the daytime hours. The terrain was rugged and mountainous at times, and when in the sands, there were desert plants with thorns. Ana Lucia also saw two rattlesnakes, a pack of wolves, and was bitten by a scorpion early in the journey.

Flor also notes that Ana Lucia was carrying a small piece of a rubber tire with a yellow plastic bag wrapped in the middle when she arrived at the border. She reports that this had been the child's "doll" during the journey and had given her great comfort. Ana Lucia has asked to have her doll back. Her mother believes that this would help her daughter settle down a bit.

The nurse is certain that the piece of tire would not have been transported to the hospital. A moment is taken to ponder how to proceed with this loss.