



## Situation and reading

## Health care systems around the world

From Australia to Botswana, from Uruguay to South Korea, every country has a unique national health system that reflects its history, economic development and political ideology. The main objectives of these systems are to promote health, to prevent diseases and to organise health care access for their citizens.

In the following texts, read the experiences of three healthcare assistants. They inform us about the national health systems in their specific countries.

» My name is Sakina Sarpong and I am a nursing assistant in Asikuma, Ghana. I look after the patients in the birth centre of the regional hospital. My job is very important, because there are few doctors and nurses in Ghana, and patients rely on us for many procedures. My favourite part of the job is to help mothers take care of their babies.



Here in Ghana, there is free universal healthcare for all Ghanaians. The government and non profit organisations provide most health services free of charge, such as medical visits, conventional drugs and antenatal care.

There are big differences between rural and urban areas because most hospitals, clinics and pharmacies are close to the cities. In the rural areas, there aren't many health care facilities, and patients have to travel long distances or rely on traditional medicine for help.

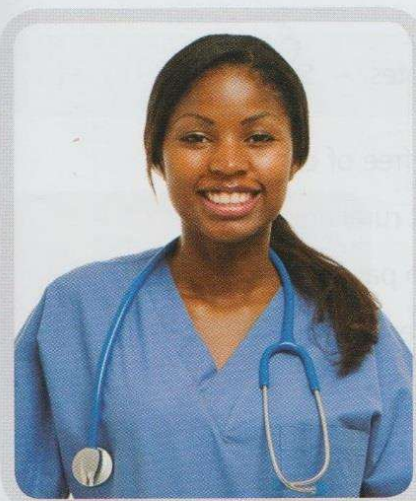
» I am Stephanie Cantu and I work as an emergency medical technician in McAllen, Texas. I love my job, because it is very challenging and rewarding. I assist any kind of medical emergency, providing first aid and basic life support. Sometimes it is difficult to remain calm because we attend life-threatening situations, but I try to stay professional.

Here in the United States, most people need to contract a private insurance in order to have access to the health care system. Apart from the insurance, you normally have to pay an out-of-pocket fee every time you go to the doctor's or visit the emergency room. Also, the cost of an ambulance is very high, and many people think twice before calling 911!

To help people in need, there are two programmes that are sponsored by the government. The Medicare programme is addressed to the elderly and disabled, and Medicaid helps people on low incomes.

» I am Víctor Riera and I am a pharmacy assistant in Valencia, Spain. I supply medicines and counsel patients in a local pharmacy. I enjoy talking to people and helping them recover from their illnesses.

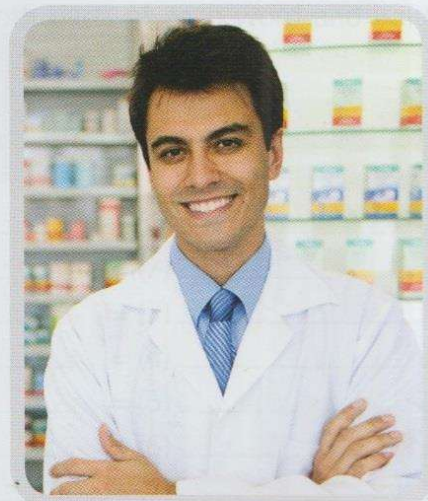
In our country, we have universal medical coverage. This means that everybody has free access to the health care system. The costs are paid with the citizens' taxes. Primary ambulatory facilities are always very close, you can find one within a 15-minute radius from any place of residency. There are also many hospitals in Spain, around 800! The drugs are paid by the government and the patients. Normally, the patients pay a small percentage of their real cost. The health system works very well, but one of the main problems are the long waiting lists for some surgeries, for example hip or knee replacements.



Sakina Sarpong



Stephanie Cantu



Víctor Riera



**Activity 1. Reading activity.** Find 5 words that you don't understand from the text. Write them in your notebook and look them up in the dictionary. After that, create a sentence that contains them.

**Activity 2. Reading activity.** After reading the text, say what person we are talking about.

- a. She is a nursing assistant:
- b. She is prepared to attend patients in an emergency:
- c. He comes from Valencia:
- d. She enjoys taking care of newborn babies:
- e. She lives in McAllen:
- f. He works as a pharmacy assistant:
- g. He is very sociable:
- h. She works in a hospital:
- i. She sometimes gets nervous when dealing with a stressful situation:

**Activity 3. Reading activity.** Copy the following sentences into your notebook and fill in the gaps with the words from the text.

facilities – surgeries – non-profit organisations – emergency – universal

- a. In North America, the \_\_\_\_\_ phone number is 911.
- b. The procedures that happen in the operating theatre are called \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. The \_\_\_\_\_ healthcare systems offer free medical attention for their citizens.
- d. Hospitals, clinics and pharmacies are types of healthcare \_\_\_\_\_.
- e. In Ghana, the healthcare system is paid by the government and \_\_\_\_\_.

**Activity 4. Reading activity.** Link the following sentences with their corresponding countries. The sentences can correspond to more than one country.

Ghana – United States – Spain

- a. Citizens have access to healthcare free of charge.
- b. Health care is not available in most rural areas.
- c. The majority of the citizens have to pay to go to the doctor's.
- d. Medicaid and Medicare help people who have difficulties accessing healthcare.
- e. Traditional medicine still has an important role.
- f. Primary attention facilities are very close to every citizen.
- g. Citizens have to pay part of the cost of the drugs.