

The joy of Being a Doctor



Van L. Cheng, MD

Mr. Gonzalez's Story Reminds Me How Lucky I Am to Be a Doctor

BY VAN L. CHENG, MD

Mr. Gonzalez hobbles into my office, a son and a daughter flanking him on either side. I soon realize that he has an infected ulcer stemming from horribly dilated and nonfunctioning varicose veins. It was obvious he was not my typical patient. Mr. Gonzalez was applying a "medicinal" powder he got from Tijuana to his ulcer daily, to no avail. With his children translating, I learn that he is a dishwasher who stands all day and, despite his pain, continues to work very long hours.

Mr. Gonzalez's story reminds me how lucky I am to be a doctor here in the United States. My father was a dishwasher when he first immigrated to this country without a penny to his name. He worked long hours to make sure my mother, siblings, and I could come over. When I passed the Statue

Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy.

— THICH NHAT HANH

of Liberty more than two decades ago, I knew one thing: This country would always give me an opportunity if I tried my hardest. As long as her torch remains glowing, I can reach my goal of being a medical doctor.

After writing an antibiotic prescription and educating Mr. Gonzalez on the care of his ulcer, I reassure him that I will treat him. I tell him he reminds me a lot of my own father's story. I tell him it is my way of paying it forward. I tell him this is part of the joy of being a doctor. **SDP**

{ABOUT THE AUTHOR}

Dr. Cheng, SDCMS and CMA member since 2006, is currently clinical instructor of surgery at UCSD, specializing in treating all vein problems without surgery.