

Video – Health experiences of a refugee family

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Background:

Jack and Mupo are a young Karen family who settled in the Eastern Region of Melbourne. Mupo arrived in Australia 2 years ago after being forced to flee from her country of birth in Burma. She lived for 10 years in a refugee camp on the Thai Burma border. Mupo was accepted as a refugee and given permission to come to Australia before her beloved husband Jack. Because she was expecting their first child she came ahead on her own to ensure a safer life. Mupo gave birth to a healthy daughter Katherine while Jack was still overseas awaiting his papers which he received in October 2015. With the family were finally reunited, it was only then that Jack was able to meet his daughter. Jack has a Bachelor degree in English and Literature and would like to study to be a Karen interpreter. They are now expecting their 2nd child and are happy living in Australia in peace and safety.

Video – Interview

The family agreed to be interviewed in relation to their health experiences in Australia. Jack interpreted questions and answers for Mupo as she is still learning English.

Questions and answers:

Jasmina: How long have you been here?

Jack: I have been here for 4 months and Mupo 2 years

Jasmina: Did either of you visit a doctor since arrival in Australia?

Jack: Yes, after Mupo arrived in Australia she saw the doctor many times before I arrived because she was expecting a baby. I did not personally need a doctor for myself.

Jasmina: What did you find was different compared to Thailand or Burma?

Jack: Mupo said the hospitals here are better, the service is faster, the doctors took care of her in a very good way and in her experience the medicines are very good.

Jasmina: In Burma what was it like visiting a hospital there, did you have to wait long for a doctor?

Jack: Yes we would wait the whole day. In my town there is only 1 hospital and many many patients!

Jasmina: Do you have the same doctor in Australia?

Jack: Yes the same doctor for both of us – a family GP

Jasmina: What were some of the good experiences going to the hospital in Australia?

Jack: Mupo said it was a good experience when her daughter was born. The doctor performed an operation which was done very well. After the birth of the baby, the doctor or nurse came to visit her and with smiles. Because at that time I was not here yet so Mupo was alone and needed the encouragement. The nurse tried to speak with Mupo (even though she did not understand) the smiling made a difference and it was a good experience.

Jasmina: Was there an interpreter how did Mupo understand the doctor?

Jack: One nurse came to show Mupo how to shower etc. but no interpreter. When Mupo was in the hospital and needed help after the operation, she asked the nurse to come and help her.

Jasmina: Mupo it seems it was a very positive experience for you?

Jack: Mupo said that after the birth the same nurse came to the home to help her.

Jasmina: Was an interpreter booked for you when you had an appointment?

Jack: Normally Mupo's Auntie came with her to interpret for her.

Jasmina: Was it ok with the doctor for her Auntie to interpret for you?

Jack: Mupo talked about a "not good experience" - when the doctor asked her questions she could not answer the questions directly relying on her Auntie to interpret. They both felt that the doctor was not happy at that time and felt the pressure which made her feel stressed.

Jasmina: Were there any good experiences with the doctor before having the baby.

Jack: Mostly it was good but when she could not answer questions she felt the doctor was not happy with her (them). One experience was not good. Before our daughter was born Mupo was requested to do something by the doctor. *[This is a possible miscommunication to do with swabs]*. Jack said that Mupo did not understand what the doctor needed her to do; she had never done this before so she could not do it. Her Auntie asked the doctor to do it for Mupo but the doctor refused. She asked the doctor again to do it for her, still a refusal. Mupo said this was not a good experience.

Jasmina: *[Talking of other appointments]*. Jack, was there enough time when you saw the doctor, to ask questions?

Jack: Normally when visiting the GP, in my experience, the doctor would ask whether there were any more questions.

Jasmina: Were you always clear about medicines when to take it and where to get it?

Jack: If we did not understand then we would ask again and the doctor would explain.

Jasmina: How would it be if you (Jack) were not there, would Mupo be ok to go and get the medicine?

Jack: Mupo said she would ask her Aunt to go with her as she cannot go by herself because she cannot understand.

Jasmina: Why can't you go by yourself Mupo?

Jack: Mupo said because she can't understand.

Jasmina: If you have a wish list, what could be better or be improved?

Jack: Interpreters are the biggest wish. Even sometimes with an interpreter they do not have the vocabulary. When booking an interpreter there is sometimes a long wait.

Jasmina: Mupo, when you went to the hospital for the first time was it easy to find where the doctor was in the hospital?

Jack: Mupo said that she went with her Auntie who asked in the front office where to go so they showed them the way.

Jasmina: If Auntie was not there what would you do?

Jack: Mupo said the baby would have been born at home!

Jasmina: Is there anything else that can be improved?

Jack:

1. As a patient going to the hospital, we need the doctor to make us feel happy... even if we can't communicate they must make us feel relaxed because we are very stressed. In the case of my wife she was in Australia alone without me so she felt very stressed.
2. The Doctor made a face like he was not happy, making it worse. They (medical staff and doctors) must smile to help patients feel more relaxed.
3. When Mupo was admitted to the hospital to deliver her baby she felt that overall it was a good experience.