

Reading on Hospitalization in Japan & the US

By **June 15th**, read your assigned portion of an interesting article about the differences in the hospitalization experience in Japan and the U.S. and post your responses to the small group “Hospitalization in Japan & the U.S.” The article shows both cultural differences and how much one’s own culture can change, even over a rather short period of time.

Source of the article: Ohnuki-Tierney, E., & Emiko, O. T. (1984). *Illness and culture in contemporary Japan: An anthropological view*. Cambridge University Press.

- 1) Read the part of the article which Dias has assigned to you. Find your assigned part by looking for your name on this PDF: <https://aogaku-daku.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Groupings-for-reading.pdf> . [Note that this is not a group activity but different students will be reading different parts of the chapter and answering only those questions relevant to the part they have read. So, each of you will be reading only about 5 pages and answering the corresponding questions.]
- 2) Read your assigned part of this article: <https://aogaku-daku.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/hospitalization2.pdf> .
- 3) Post your answers to the questions (below) by June 15th in the Small Group on Edmodo: “Hospitalization in Japan & the U.S.”

PART A: (pp. 189–194)

1. What Taoistic beliefs did the author find still affect the choice of hospital for a small minority of Japanese? Did this surprise you? Do you know anyone who is concerned with such matters?
2. What evidence does the author cite for her claim that Japanese are not simply passive recipients of health care?
3. What did the author see as a negative result of the system for getting introduced to 'desirable' doctors?
4. What are some of the reasons people have given for the relatively long hospital stays that are the norm in Japan? Do you find these reasons convincing?
5. What experiences have you had with hospitals in Japan and how did those experiences mesh with the observations of the author? Try to ask a parent or grandparent if they find any of the cultural aspects of hospitalization in Japan, which were brought up in the article, to be familiar.
6. If you, or any of your family members, had medical treatment in another country, please describe the experience. Were there any cultural differences that made you feel surprised or uncomfortable?

Reading on Hospitalization in Japan & the US

PART B: (pp. 194–199)

1. How is a patient's individual identity reinforced when (s)he is in hospital in Japan? How does this contrast to the way patients are treated in the US? How does this depart from the stereotypical view of American and Japanese societies?
2. In Japan, what is expected of a patient's family members? How does this contrast with the situation in the US? What do you think are the advantages/ disadvantages of the two systems?
3. What special role do women family members have in caring for ill or aged family members? How is this situation changing?
4. Traditionally, what role did the eldest son (and his wife) play in caring for his aged parents? What did he get in return? How has this situation changed since the end of WWII? How do you feel about the situation of the aged in Japan today? Who will take care of your parents (and you) when they/you get old?
5. What experiences have you had with hospitals in Japan and how did those experiences mesh with the observations of the author? Try to ask a parent or grandparent if they find any of the cultural aspects of hospitalization in Japan, which were brought up in the article, to be familiar.
6. If you, or any of your family members, had medical treatment in another country, please describe the experience. Were there any cultural differences that made you feel surprised or uncomfortable?

PART C: (pp. 199–206)

1. According to the author, what are the customs and functions associated with 'mimai' in Japan? How does this contrast to hospital visitation in the US? What are some advantages and disadvantages of the two styles?
2. What are some problems that result from the frequent presence of visitors in the rooms of patients in Japan? How have some hospitals responded to these problems?
3. Describe the complicated system of giving gifts (and preparing food) for patients in Japan.
4. Tell about any personal experiences you've had with hospitals in Japan. Were these experiences similar to what was described by the author or do you think her information is outdated?
5. What experiences have you had with hospitals in Japan and how did those experiences mesh with the observations of the author? Try to ask a parent or grandparent if they find any of the cultural aspects of hospitalization in Japan, which were brought up in the article, to be familiar.
6. If you, or any of your family members, had medical treatment in another country, please describe the experience. Were there any cultural differences that made you feel surprised or uncomfortable?

Reading on Hospitalization in Japan & the US

PART D: (pp. 206–211)

1. Describe the custom of 'tsukisoi,' and how it forms an integral part of the Japanese system of hospitalization. Try to ask a parent or grandparent if they find any of the cultural aspects of hospitalization in Japan, which were brought up in the article, to be familiar.
2. The author describes how patients in Japan tend to entrust doctors with their overall welfare--not only with medical problems. Do you see this as positive or negative? Why? Do you think the author's observations reflect current reality?
3. Describe the case of Mr. A (described on p. 209). How did his hospital stay lead to the expression of suppressed emotions and intensified interactions among the participants--both family members and workmates.
4. At the end of the chapter the author describes individual differences to the cultural practices related to hospital stays in Japan. What generalizations can you make about the hospital experience in Japan? Describe some individual variations cited by the author, or from your own experience.
5. If you had some experiences with hospitalization abroad (even visiting someone in hospital) tell us about them. What cultural differences did you notice?
6. In what ways would you like to see the hospital experience--either for inpatients or outpatients--improve in Japan? If you are from a country other than Japan, how would you like to see the hospital experience improved there?

NOTE to Everybody: We may use your responses in a discussion we will have in class with members who read different parts of the article, so be prepared to fill them in on what you read. Just skim through the parts that you don't have direct responsibility for.