

**Patient Name: Ana Galanis**

Diagnosis: Head Injury

Character Brief

### Patient story

Ana Galanis, is a 44 year old female admitted to hospital three weeks ago following a fall from a ladder while attempting to repair an external shutter in her home. Ana suffered a traumatic brain injury in the fall with deficits including impulsive behaviour, uncoordinated movements when walking (ataxic gait) and swallowing difficulties (dysphagia). Due to her swallowing difficulties, Ana has been placed on a modified diet of thickened fluids/ pureed food. She currently requires close supervision when walking, with staff using a walking belt to manage her balance / coordination problems as well as her impulsiveness. At present, she is not receiving any medical intervention and is awaiting a bed at a rehabilitation facility to optimise her recovery.

Ana's family is very keen to take her home. Her 69 year old mother and 72 year old father are very supportive and wish to care for Ana and her children full time. However the family appears to be in denial about Ana's injuries and have little insight into how to best care for her. The physiotherapist has educated her family about how to use the walking belt, but they have refused to use it. Last week, Ana suffered a fall when trying to walk to the toilet while her room was crammed with family members visiting. The family has also been non-compliant with her modified diet, bringing in chicken broth for Ana to eat at mealtimes and giving her biscuits. Ana has also been found in other patients' rooms looking for something to drink or eat.

### Background information about the patient

Ana is a very family oriented person, who loves her children and her husband dearly. She has a large and supportive network of family and friends and has received many visitors since her admission to hospital. She is a larger than life character, who is positive and very friendly.

Ana lives in a two storey home with husband Angelo and two children Dean (aged 14) and Marcus (aged 11). She works part time in payroll for the family business - an auto parts retail franchise. Her husband works 6 days a week managing the business with his brothers.

Ana is very loyal to her family - they are her "hobby". She loves to cook, spend time with family and friends and is passionate about the family business.

This project was possible due to funding made available by Health Workforce Australia

## Physical characteristics

Ana will be wearing a hospital gown and will be in bed. Please bring along underwear to wear under the gown and a dressing gown and pair of slippers.

Ana walks with an ataxic gait pattern. This means that she walks in a way similar to someone who is drunk, noticeably unsteady and with her feet wider apart than usual. A good example of ataxic gait is shown in this you tube clip:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Fu5AGseNa4>

Despite her unsteady walking pattern, Ana feels that she walks fine and does not call for assistance when getting out of bed. Staff at the hospital use a walking belt to help guide her when she moves (this is a belt applied around the waist which has handles on it. Staff hold on to the handles when guiding patients). Her walking become worse in busy environments – last week Ana suffered a fall when trying to walk to the toilet while her room was crammed with family members visiting.

Ana has difficulty swallowing liquids - she coughs and splutters when drinking and things often go the wrong way. It is for this reason that she has been put on a modified diet of pureed food/ thickened fluids e.g. baby food, custards. When given solids e.g. biscuits or crackers, she wolfs them down and then chokes on them.

## Patient's affects/ behaviours

Ana's behavior has changed as a result of her head injury. She is impulsive, uninhibited and unpredictable – she says or does things without warning. Her memory is often impaired – this is variable, but generally she cannot be relied on to give an accurate recollection of events. She also has a short attention span. She can also fixate on things and repeat herself. Ana cannot consistently remember what day it is. At times she remembers her age and birthday (you can make up a date).

She can say or do inappropriate things. For example, when she feels hungry she often goes to other patient's rooms and steals their food. She does not like being on a pureed diet and has begged her family to bring food from home in for her. They have done this as they are concerned about the weight that Ana has lost since the injury. Ana's weight was previously in the obese category, but she is now at a healthy weight. Ana is quite pleased about this and likes to tell people about how great she now looks.

Ana misses her family immensely. She desperately wants to get home to her boys and doesn't want to be in hospital. She thinks she is fine and doesn't need to be there. She is vague about the injury and at times can't remember why she is in hospital.

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### Patient's current concerns

Ana loves being around people, so is quite happy with the company she receives while being in hospital. She doesn't have many complaints.

Her only concern is missing her family. She wants to go home to be with them. If told that they are coming to visit she will be extremely happy and excited.

She is also hungry and wants a proper meal. Ana has a Greek background and loves home cooked Greek meals. She will ask the students to bring her some food/ drink as she is hungry/ thirsty.

### Patient's history of the problem

Ana is quite vague about the accident. She knows she is in hospital, but when asked why she will be unsure. If people tell her why, she will be concerned i.e like she is hearing about the accident for the first time.

Ana cannot recall any procedures she has had. She loves all the staff at the hospital, but cannot recall who she has seen and for what purpose.

### Patient's past medical history

Ana was previously overweight – she has lost weight in hospital.

She feels that she is very healthy and has no medical conditions.

She will have a few drinks at parties and when dining with family and friends. She does not smoke and thinks that smoking is awful. Her Dad smokes and she wishes he would stop.

### Scenario prompts

Ana may interact with the other patients and people in the room. If there is a quiet moment, she may wish to get out of bed and stumble across the room. She may also try to steal some food/ drink from another person's table (and demonstrate her difficulty swallowing). Speech pathology students will be most interested in this.

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