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My clinical experience for September 30th was very inspiring. Many of the elderly that were congregating in the cafeteria were eager to have their blood pressures read. It may have been due to them recognizing a familiar face, but I was in awe with how many people called out to me and actually *requested* my service. For those sitting at tables in large or small groups the request was contagious – as I took one person’s blood pressure another person sitting at the same table asked me to take theirs. Most of the blood pressure readings that I recorded on this day were within normal range, however, there were a select few (all within the Hispanic population) that were slightly higher than normal. They listened to my teaching about adopting a healthy diet and other lifestyle choices but they explained they were aware of all of the information I provided. I was bothered by simple responses to my teaching with sayings that they hadn’t yet or had just taken their blood pressure medications. I explained the importance of taking medications regularly and at required times, but also reinforced the idea that medication alone is not adequate enough for blood pressure management and remaining disease-free – consuming healthy foods (specifically adequate fruits and vegetables) and remaining active are just as important in the maintenance of one’s health.

As I continued meeting with people to take their blood pressures I came across and man and woman who were sitting together at a table reading newspapers printed in Spanish. I read both of their blood pressures, which were both slightly higher than normal range and then sat with them to have a discussion. I was totally blown away by my conversation with them – both were living with hypertension and Type II diabetes for about 15 years. They were otherwise healthy. They were very knowledgeable about their diseases and upon diagnosis with their diseases had chosen to live healthier lifestyles. Both participated in several physical pursuits – the man told me that every other morning at 5:00AM he begins his workouts in his home which include tai chi and some weight bearing activities and the woman explained that she attends the gym in her neighborhood a few times a week and participates in Zumba classes at Grand Street Settlement. They each explained to me that they had lost a lot of weight since their diagnosis and contribute much of their illness to their cultural diets. Furthermore, they enjoyed staying active because they liked the way it made them feel and explained that walking was really important to them. Lastly, they showed me articles that they had read about the different foods they began to incorporate into their daily diets (fruit smoothies and vegetable juices) and explained why they were healthy (detoxification and fat burning mechanisms).

I sat with them at their table for about a half hour and it was the most insightful experience I have ever had with the elderly population. They were full of knowledge and wisdom and were very comedic. I was touched by how responsible they were for their own health and their motivation to stay alive and well – they both had children and grandchildren and shared photos with me. They were true inspirations.