

CORE QUALITY: EMPATHY

E-mail body:

Hi folks,

This month I want to share with you a very moving experience that an Emergency Physician shared about a patient visit. I share it with you in hopes that it may help you refocus your vision on the privilege we have to take care of other human beings in this profession we call healthcare.

The doctor was taking care of a gentleman in his late 60's. He came in for something seemingly minor but had an abnormal vital sign that led the physician to ask more questions and do additional tests. They found he had a heart condition (unrelated to his initial reason for coming to see them) that required admission and cardiac work up. They additionally found some worrisome findings on CAT scan imaging that was done while working him up.

The patient was quite surprised to be given shocking news, during what he thought was going to be a quick visit for a minor problem.

The patient was alone in the ER and phoned his parents to inform them of the news: "Dad, I need to be admitted;" The Emergency Physician overheard him say, before he stepped out of the room.

Shortly thereafter, a nice gentleman in his 90's shows up to visit him. It is the patient's father. As all dads tend to do, he used his humor and "dad jokes" to lighten up the mood and give some much-needed reassurance, to his late 60's "boy."

He got up close to his son and leaned over and the two of them embraced. The physician was able to see the patient's eyes close tightly as his dad embraced him and gave him a kiss on his forehead. The dad said: "I love you. Everything will be ok. You and I are made of the same stuff and, look at me, we are like a bad weed that never dies."

The seasoned Physician admitted that a lump formed in his throat as he witnessed this moment. What a privilege to work with people, families, human beings.

The Emergency Physician recalls thinking about this tender moment and asked himself the question: Why did it make me feel this way? After a while, he realized the answer: "I felt empathy for them because I am a dad and I have kids and I would have felt the same way." It was EMPATHY.

Empathy is trying to understand what another person is feeling. It is seeing the world through another's eyes. It helps people to get along better and to feel better.

Having empathy is a key ingredient to becoming the best person you can be. You can practice empathy by:

- listening to someone rather than trying to talk to them
- asking someone how they are feeling if you think there is something wrong
- learning about people from diverse backgrounds and cultures
- showing concern and care for others
- paying attention to the needs of others
- getting to know someone better instead of judging them

Let us not forget that our patients are not a diagnosis; but are loved ones to other people, who worry and care about them.

Thank you for choosing a career in healthcare. It takes a unique type of personality to choose this path in life. Thank you for your patience and long-suffering. For doing your job day in and day out.

Until next month,

[YOUR SIGNATURE]

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