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A Tribute to our Nurses

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A Tribute to Our Nurses

Anusha Govind, MD

I turned faint and weary as the page came through. “Your patient’s heart rate is one hundred eighty.” My legs shook as I ran up the stairs. Thoughts racing a mile a minute, hoping someone more knowledgeable might be there first. As I turned a corner, color draining from my face. Then I spot my savior, the nurse, holding a syringe filled with the medication. I knew now my patient and I were in good hands.

As I had a conversation with my patient and her family, Her medication pumps went off, the bed alarm blared, the television roared loudly in the background. We were trying to answer her serious questions in somber, hushed tones. Trying to convey our understanding of her disease processes.

Removing every distraction, her nurse was there. To turn off the pump, help the patient up in bed, pause the television remote. Allowing us all to focus on the health of our patient.

Another patient needs labs every four hours to make sure his body doesn’t reject his medications. Veins thin and thready, rolling and scarred. He winces in pain as he was stuck for the fourth time tonight. Ultrasound, tighter tourniquets, smaller needles. When all he really needed was a nurse’s sensitive touch. One finger on the target vessel, holding it taut. Finally, labs were drawn.

Three more hours into the night, a patient complains of more pain. We had already given him large doses of analgesics. We told the patient once, knowing he’ll ask again, against his better judgment. “No more, not for another few hours.” A seemingly simple answer from the house staff.

While behind the scenes, a nurse was truly alleviating pain by adjusting his bed, placing a heating pad, laying a comforting hand on where it hurts. Compassion, a virtue each nurse is blessed with.

As the night comes to an end, Sleepy eyed house staff wander. CODE BLUE, CODE BLUE. Suddenly everyone’s running. Nurses there first, compressions already begun. I frantically wonder, what exactly happened? What do I do next?

The nursing team already with the crash cart in hand. Suggest epinephrine. The code quickly turns from chaos to an organized rhythm. Her pulse restarted. Nurses calling loved ones. Compliment the team on a job well done.

The early hours dawn, and the 4 am interns start their rounds. Interns turn pale as the patient yells about his pain and all the distractions over night. Only the intern, often the receiver of frustration, as the day starts. Tears pouring down, trying to comfort. Who runs in to save the morning? But the nurse. Easing the patient and intern alike. A twinkle in her eye, as the nurse knows year after year, her jobs gets harder on July first.

That beloved last page of the night. “Patient is vomiting. I’ve cleaned them, changed them, and restarted their fluids. Maybe they need something for nausea?” Everything the patient really needs has already been done. As I reflect on the night, There’s little I could have done well without my nurses.

“Sure, zofran. Thank you...For everything.”