

# The Weight We Carry

Category: Hospitalized

written by Segenet Bizuneh | June 16, 2025

It was a regular duty day at the neonatal ward when I received a frantic call from my intern colleague. "Come quickly," she said, "We just received a critical case from the OBGY unit."

I rushed over. She showed me a tiny, fragile newborn—barely alive.

"How far along was the pregnancy?" I asked.

"Twenty-two weeks," she replied.

I froze. Twenty-two weeks? By legal standards in our country, that's considered an abortion. The newborn's skin was translucent, her body underdeveloped. She was barely breathing. But instinct took over. We started CPAP and fluids. Her condition worsened. With no neonatal ventilator available, we resorted to manual bagging.

By law, we weren't even obligated to do this; it was technically a non-viable fetus. But something deeper than law held us back: the white coats hanging by the door. Those coats weren't just fabric. They represented an oath, a duty. My friend and I nodded silently.

Then the mother came. "Please... just keep her alive until the father arrives," she pleaded. "He's abroad. He'll be here in five to seven days."

So we stayed.

For seven long days and nights, we took turns manually bagging the newborn, sleeping in shifts, wrists aching, hearts breaking. We weren't just fighting for breath. We were preserving a family's final moments of hope.

Finally, the father arrived. When he saw his newborn, he broke down in tears. With trembling hands, he asked to do the manual bagging himself. For hours, he held on, watching her struggle for every breath. Eventually, he whispered that it was time.

Silently, like a cold rainy evening, a tear slid down my cheek. We hugged. It was time to say goodbye: to send this soul back to her Creator.

My colleague went to the funeral. I stayed, sleepless and emotionally crushed, despite profound physical fatigue.

This is the part of health care that nobody talks about.

Being a health professional isn't just about procedures, medications or diagnoses. It's about the thousands of untold, heartbreaking stories. Quiet sacrifices that drain our spirits while we carry on without pause.

We're not asking for luxuries. Just that hospitals be better equipped. That our pain be acknowledged. That we be respected. And above all, that we be paid fairly for the weight we carry, not just in our arms, but in our hearts.

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