

Joyce

Category: The Waiting Room

written by Colleen T. Fogarty | April 28, 2016

I head out of the emergency department of our local tertiary care hospital. The waiting room seems pitifully small, probably twenty chairs, with the security desk, check-in desk, triage station and the entrance doors in close proximity. There's no space for pacing here, and sometimes not enough chairs.

I notice a familiar figure, dressed in bright red, who stands out from the others. With a start, I realize it's Joyce, one of my heroes. Joyce is the nurse practice manager at our sister health center, and she's transformed the place into one known for its engaged staff and team-based care. Her warmth and enthusiasm are contagious.

Normally, seeing Joyce fills me joy and anticipation of what great news or interesting question she has for me. But quickly my anticipation turns to dread. She shouldn't be sitting here, not at 11 pm on a weeknight.

Joyce stands up to greet me, smiling as she tells me about her parents' brand new car and how they totaled it tonight. She introduces me to her mom, an elegant woman seated in a wheelchair, and her younger sister. They are waiting for their dad's x-rays. Her mom has already been seen; she's got no broken bones.

Joyce tells me about the presentation she has planned for tomorrow's practice manager learning collaborative. I wonder to myself if she should be coming in to work, given the situation. I gently shush her, encouraging her to take care of herself and her folks.

I head out into the pouring rain, marveling at my hero, fully engaged with her life and her work, with enough energy to greet me enthusiastically even as she manages her own family emergency.

Note to reader: Joyce has given me permission to share this story.

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