

25 Minutes

Category: Stress and Burnout

written by Sarah Gilyard | June 25, 2017

Pager rings. Just 5 minutes to get to the ED. Calling down as I rush to the trauma elevators, they tell me over the phone "Shots fired at a hotel in downtown Los Angeles." I know that place..

At least 3 people arriving. The ED is bustling, preparing for their arrival. Blade and Prolene stitch in my scrub pocket, I am ready. We are ready.

For a moment the ED almost seems silent.

Waiting... We look around at each other, at the equipment, not knowing what to expect, yet ready for whatever comes our way. Every time the doors open, heads turn: is it time?

Within minutes they arrive. You arrive. We split up and team surrounds you. We envelop you as the paramedics tell us your story.

En route they were unable to get your pulse back. Chest compressions. Rescue breaths. No pulse, no signs of life.

It has been 25 minutes since they found you and brought you to us.

Gunshot wounds to the chest and back.

We race to remove your clothes, to assess for all the injuries. I place my hand over my breast pocket, blade still ready. But 25 minutes... 25 minutes.

My chief runs over and hears your story. No thoracotomy. It is too late. We must give our attention to the others now.

It was too late. Too long without a pulse. Without oxygen to supply your brain and body. Your injuries too severe.

I turn back to look at you. I remember your socks, little Christmas patterns.

On to the next room. The others are stabilized. One left paralyzed.

Outside I find your parents, wandering the halls. Somehow I know who they are. They ask me where they can go, they tell me their son has just died.

I am unable to speak, unable to tell them I just saw you. Unable to tell them I was supposed to be the one to bring you back.

I place my hand on a shoulder and guide them to the social worker's office. Inside they are busy: phones ringing, papers everywhere. They seem surprised as we have arrived with no warning.

Barely able to speak, I utter that their son has passed, and I am not sure how to help them. A social worker rises from her seat and pulls them in. She

will take it from here. I feel grateful to her as I withhold my own emotions, these are not my tears to cry.

They turn and thank me. I nod my head, turn and walk down the hall, feeling as though I can't quite catch my breath.

Pager screams. Refocus and turn back. Back to the resuscitation room, back to work.

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