

Frustrated Smoker

Category: Smoking

written by Joan Greland-Goldstein | August 2, 2021

Buzzzzz! I looked up from charting temperatures and checked the call board. It was Mr. Anderson again. *Geez, I thought, this is the fourth time he's rung his bell, and it's only 4:20! We have a long way to go till it's 11:00.*

When I walked into his room, he was sitting straight up in bed with his legs on top of the covers. His face was drawn up in a tight scowl.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Anderson?" I asked.

"My catheter is clogged!"

I looked at the bag hanging on the side of his bed and the clear plastic tube that connected his catheter to the drainage bag. There was urine both places. "It doesn't look clogged to me," I said. "There's plenty of urine in your bag."

"Watch this!" he said. He took a long drink of water, then pointed to the tubing curled on his bed. "See! Nothing's coming out!"

My exasperation held my chuckle in check.

"It doesn't work like that, Mr. Anderson. It takes time for your body to process the water and for your kidneys to produce urine. You won't see immediate results."

He patted the pocket of his hospital gown, then scabbled in the drawer of his bedside table.

"Where are my cigarettes?" he said. "I need a smoke!" This was in the mid-'60s, and smoking was allowed in hospitals.

"Remember," I told him, "your doctor said you can't smoke now that you've had a heart attack, so we took away your cigarettes."

"Well, what are you going to do about this clogged catheter?"

Since I knew nothing short of a cigarette would relax him, I aimed to distract him instead.

"The supper trays have just been delivered," I said. "I'll be right back with yours."

The term "Type A personality" wasn't in common use yet back then, but as soon as I read the description of it, Mr. Anderson immediately came to my mind as its poster child.

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