

Saved by the Bell . . . of My Stethoscope

Category: Accidents

written by Angela Scicutella | October 3, 2025

One fine spring day, I strolled out of the hospital, heading from the ER to the clinic building—wearing my white coat, with my stethoscope draped around my neck, surrounded by residents and students, chatting happily about the weather and sports. It was a wonderfully ordinary moment. Suddenly, I found myself knocked to the ground and my stethoscope broken—the bell separated from the aquamarine tubing—unable to fathom what had just occurred. A golf ball trickled by me, rolling toward the curb.

My colleagues rushed to help me to my feet. Though shaken, I dusted myself off and continued walking to the clinic so as to be on time for our afternoon patients. As I looked around to try to make sense of this unexpected event, I realized that a golf course, surrounded by a high fence, abuts a small parking lot adjacent to the ER. I'd never taken much notice of it before and had walked past it many times without a glance or thought. Clearly, what had felled me was an errant golf ball that had soared over the fence; likely, the golfer wasn't even aware of what had transpired.

When I walked into the clinic, my residents and students were buzzing to their colleagues about what had happened to their attending. One staff member came over to me and said, "Doctor, it was not your day." I looked quizzically at her, and she continued, "My son's friend, a golf caddy, was hit in the chest with a golf ball and developed an arrhythmia and died soon after." I nodded, understanding now what her words signified.

How sad for him. But for me, I realized that the bell of my stethoscope had probably saved me at least from injury and maybe worse. I felt extremely grateful for a tool I use every day. I keep that stethoscope in a box in my closet, as a reminder of my good fortune and the fragility of life.

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