

The Right Call

Category: Connections

written by Sarah Liu | January 2, 2023

How to thank the on-call physician? Not on MyChart. My brain previously so flustered I couldn't put a name to the voice; only by checking "Medications," where he'd written a thorough note, could I make the link, but impossible to message directly.

A holiday pharmacological crisis, I have to remind myself, "it's not your fault," since I requested a refill of the schedule III drug on Thursday, not my fault the stock ran low, that state law sets timing of dispensation, none left by Friday. The humor I usually use to cope with medical problems now backfires, contacting UCSF's main line for the on-call neurologist on Saturday morning, waiting for hours, only to receive a reply from the on-call urologist. This would be funny if it weren't so un-funny. I have to call the main line again. Once the right physician, Dr. Kleen, gets the message, he realizes the urgency of the problem, connecting five minutes later.

Drug availability info given only to physicians, leaving the grunt work to him— in his car parked at a meter for last minute holiday shopping, twelve calls to find an emergency supply. 4.15 pm, Saturday, December 24. Drugstore closes at 6. An epileptic, I can't drive. A few frantic phone calls, friends not home, or too far away. Neu versus U a waste of crucial time.

Pharmacies closed on Christmas Day, so I miss three doses. "Cold turkey" symptoms, which Dr. Kleen warned might appear, which they do, advice to go to ER, which I don't, home better than a gurney and risk of more CT radiation.

On Monday, a friend and I pick up my med ASAP, my brain still in "off" mode until taking the second dose in the afternoon. Only then can I go online and find Dr. Kleen's lab page, complete with research and email, to write a coherent thank you:

I will also CC Dr Shih, my regular epileptologist, making sure she knows of her colleague's efforts going above and beyond.

BTW, I looked at your lab's website, and my cat's name is Fourier, for my MRIs, his magnetic personality, and his crazy cat run sequences.*

Two messages in my inbox on Tuesday. An oxymoron: Dr. Kleen says "it comes with the territory," while Dr. Shih compliments a professional who goes "above and beyond." Routine practice to overcome blunders, corporate myopia, and legal entanglement— especially on holiday weekends.

BTW, Fourier transforms*, a domain large enough to include my home, as well as Dr. Kleen's, whose daughter has a stuffed animal named Fourier. She also has one named Hilbert*, but that goes above and beyond.

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**Fourier and Hilbert transforms are algorithms used to convert time domain signals to frequency domain measurements. They are used in radiology, brainwave (EEG) analysis, and other applications of technology in medicine.*