

Halloween Fright

Category: Emergencies

written by Arlin Roy | November 3, 2022

My wife and I had just gotten home from work one Halloween evening when we got one of “those calls.” A young, male voice told me our nineteen-year-old daughter, Liza, had gone to her college dispensary with abdominal pain and had been sent to a local teaching hospital several hours before. He told me she had been admitted, and they wanted permission to do an appendectomy.

Anxiety flooded my brain, my shoulders began to twitch and my hands shook. My mind started racing about possibilities and how to know what was most likely in this situation. Because I am a minister and a social worker, this was way out of my league.

Like any quick-thinking, avid viewer of the TV series, ER, I began peppering him with questions: “What is her temp? How long has it been at that point and has it fluctuated and, if so, in what direction? What is her pain level, and what kind of pain is it?” By the time I got to “What is her white count?” he began addressing me as “Doctor.” Almost all of my questions were answered with “I don’t know.” I ended the conversation with, “You do not have my permission. Absolutely not. We will be there in several hours to discuss this.”

My wife and I grabbed some food and clothes and jumped into our aged economy car. I reasoned that I should go very fast, and I might pick up a police escort. I discovered that the top speed for our car was ninety miles per hour before it began to shake. There were no police, but what is normally a three-hour trip took two hours.

When we reached the hospital, the waiting room was showing a gruesome Halloween movie that did nothing to steady our nerves. My energy dropped into a grim determination, and my wife’s anxiety increased.

When we saw Liza, her temperature had come down a little and the diagnosis was basically a urinary tract infection gone massively rogue. Several medical students came in at intervals to ask the same base-line questions and thank her for her time. A supervisor answered our questions and treated her with antibiotics.

She still, at fifty-seven-years old, has her appendix.

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