

# To a Lifetime of Happiness in the OR

Category: Surgery

written by Swathy Elangovan | October 14, 2022

Ever since my freshman year in med school, I'd dreamed of being a surgeon.

Yes, surgeons face long working hours, time away from family, and a challenging work environment. But I see surgeons as invincible. To be a surgeon, you must forgo anything that makes you feel vulnerable.

I would like to share two incidents from my internship that touched my heart.

On a Monday morning, the waiting room was flooded with patients. I was asked to examine Patient X. The patient complained of pain in the lower right abdomen, as well as nausea and vomiting—classic symptoms of appendicitis. I informed my attending and admitted the patient.

The radiologist's report confirmed that it was appendicitis. Surgery was set for the next day.

Late the next day, during evening rounds on the ward, to my surprise I saw Patient X studying—sitting on the bed cross-legged, leaning against the wall, with books spread all across the bedsheets.

I asked, "Don't you feel tired and painful? You should just rest."

My patient replied, "Yes, Ma'am, I do have pain. But my grades are more important than my illness. My college tests are in a week, and I need to prepare to my fullest capability. I have a responsibility to take care of my family, being the first to graduate."

A quote flashed into my mind: "If you truly want to do something, you will find a way."

The next week, following a full recovery, Patient X returned home.

Another especially memorable encounter was with Patient Y.

This patient had gangrene of the right big toe. Tests were performed, a diagnosis was arrived at, and a treatment plan was confirmed.

The following day, Patient Y's toe was amputated. Afterward, I noticed tears flowing down Y's cheeks. I asked if the tears were due to pain. No, replied Patient Y, the tears were due to losing a part of the body.

Surgeons have a responsibility greater than just cutting, mending, and suturing organs. They also have a responsibility to be calm, composed, and empathetic.

I bow down to every surgeon on this planet who puts their job and their patients before everything else.

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