

A near-death experience

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A near-death experience in medical school launched my passion to become a surgeon. During a respiratory lecture, I was ironically rushed to emergency with a tension pneumothorax. I was hemodynamically unstable and was saved by the fast actions of my professor, who decompressed my chest with a needle. The hole in my lung persisted for four weeks, unamenable to conservative management and multiple chest tubes. I lived in constant pain and was fearful that I might not be able to become a doctor if I was physically unwell. After a long hospitalization, it was surgery in the form of three small laparoscopic incisions that brought me out of the hospital on the same day. After I was discharged, my desire to help others similarly motivated me to become a surgeon.

I constantly reflect on this experience when I take care of my own patients. My hospitalization brought to light the vulnerability and uncertainty of being a patient. I experienced firsthand the fear, pain, and anxiety that patients go through when faced with a sudden medical crisis. The difficulty of sleeping in hos-

pital, the annoying pain of an IV line, and the nervous anticipation before a medical procedure. This humbling experience made me realize the importance of empathy and compassion in healthcare. It deepened my understanding of the emotional impact that illness can have on patients and their families and reinforced the significance of providing not just medical care, but also emotional support to my patients.

I feel privileged to become a urologist. I knew urology was for me when I did not notice the time passing during each day I spent in the OR. No matter how long we stayed at the hospital, I felt a tremendous amount of joy learning about new surgical concepts and caring for such a diverse population of patients. Despite the deep satisfaction and fulfillment of performing surgery, my experience highlighted the importance of taking time for patients. I strive to provide clear and concise explanations, actively listen to patients' concerns, and ensure they fully understand their diagnosis, treatment options, and prognosis. I also make it a priority to involve patients in their own care decisions, empowering them to be active participants in their healthcare journey.

My personal experience of a pneumothorax was a life-changing event that shaped me into a better doctor. It humbled me and deepened my empathy. Despite the suffering I went through, I realize this experience has made me into the clinician I am today.