



MEDICAL STUDENT COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Knowing Your Patients in a Busy Emergency Department

Brett Rosen

AAEM/RSA Medical Student Council President



Imagine one of those days in the emergency department when everything goes haywire – multiple traumas, 45 patients in the waiting room, half the patients in the ED waiting for beds upstairs, people demanding their sore throats, runny noses and bruised legs be seen immediately, and you have the entire hospital security force and half of the police department in the hospital accompanying patients or restraining

them. This is why many of us go into emergency medicine – the adrenaline rush of controlling and coordinating chaos! As a medical student in the ED, we aren't quite at that level yet – we're happy to see patients, write notes, do some procedures here and there, and get a good sense of the variety that we will get to fully take care of at some point in our lives when we graduate from residency.

But there is one thing as medical students that we do get a chance to see a bit more of than we will in residency. With the extra time we are given to see our patients, we are able to explore a bit more of the human and personal sides of our patients. For students, it's not the number of patients we can see per hour, coding properly to ensure appropriate reimbursement, or managing the stream of ambulances coming from the outside. For us, we get to know our patients just a little bit better. When it's really busy and all of the patients are seen, go back to your patient's room and talk to them. Talk to their family. Find out what's concerning them. See if you can find out if

there is another reason that they're really there (another good way to impress your attending). The patient may be triaged or known as the frequent flier or the homeless guy on the corner, but I guarantee you something that I have learned even on other rotations and by spending just two extra minutes with each patient: every patient means something to somebody.

It gives you a different perspective on the human aspect of medicine, even in the busy ED. Take that two minutes and refer the person to a shelter or give them the name of a free clinic or a primary care doctor. You help the whole system this way and at the same time are advocating for your patient. Remember that the elderly gentleman you are taking care of might mean the world to his daughter. Remember that although the homeless man may not have any family that cares about him, he could have a best friend on the street that knows everything about his life. Remember that the prisoner could have a daughter at home who misses him. When you go to care for each patient, keep these things in mind and remember that every patient means something to somebody.

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