

*“We have a 21 year old male involved in a high speed motorcycle accident. The patient has sustained an open tib/fib fracture of the right lower extremity with active extravasation. ETA 10 minutes...”*

EMT dispatch

February 24, 1993 3:47 PM

The first time I ever laid eyes in a trauma bay was not as a medical student, surgical resident or trauma fellow, but as one who visits such places just as frequently. I can clearly remember the cry of the sirens, as we pulled into the ambulance entrance and the immediate hovering of many unfamiliar faces. I remember asking the medical staff to tell my family I love them and that my last thoughts were of them. For at the time, I truly did think I would never see them again. The confident reply of “you are going to tell them yourself” seemed to ease the overwhelming fear, and I knew I was in capable hands. The voices continued on and I heard terms like vascular graft, latissimus free flap, skin grafts and the possibility of amputation. I hung on to every word as the physicians discussed my case for what seemed like an eternity. Finally the decision was made to attempt to reconstruct my leg. The choices made by the trauma team that day were choices that would affect my life forever. The impact made by the surgeons during my hospital stay and the relationships that would continue even long after, inspired my decision for a career in medicine. The same inspiration, which fueled my desire for a life of service, has also influenced my choice in a fellowship in Trauma/Critical care.

There is an unnerving truth that one does not appreciate all of one’s gifts until they are gone. One minute I was feeling absolutely invincible and carefree, the next minute bed ridden with a long and difficult recovery ahead. As I lay incapacitated, my hospitalization provided the opportunity for self reflection and thought. Through it all, I came to a new understanding of responsibility in life and a new respect for the human body. Life was never more precious and my body never seemed more fragile. It is this admiration of the human body that never ceases to amaze me. To be a part of a field which is able to assist when this intricate and almost perfect system needs aid, continually impels me to learn more, work harder and always strive to improve. For the role of the surgeon extends far beyond that of skills in the operating room. Equally as important are those interactions during every morning round, clinic visit and trauma bay evaluation. I personally know the anguish of patient fears, the difficulties of recovery and the relief of a simple explanation. I cannot help but remember my own hospitalization and empathize with those patients whose lives I encounter.

Throughout my medical career my motto has been to work hard first and foremost. But as I mature into my training being a good physician also extends to social responsibility, and acting as a mentor and teacher for impressionable students in addition to learning to operate. Perhaps one of the greatest highlights of my fellowship has been my surgical medical mission to Hospital Albert Schweitzer in Deschepelles, Haiti. How naively I thought that I was going to provide my services to this underserved area. For the truth was I learned far more than I could ever give to the Haitian community and people. Another great highlight has been being awarded the Houseofficer Educator of the Year award bestowed to me by the graduating medical school class. I have tried to carry on the tradition of my mentors to try and learn something new on every patient... on everyday. A tradition I have embraced through medical school, residency, fellowship and now my career as a Critical Care Trauma surgeon.

To accomplish things in life takes dedication, training and commitment. To find meaning in life takes perspective, experience and inspiration. I have chosen a career in Trauma / Critical Care for it is the area in medicine, which I find motivation and meaning. It is the specialty, which has profoundly affected my life and the specialty to which I plan to dedicate myself...in hopes to someday giveback to others, as much that has been given to me.