

**2015 EAST Oriens Award – This is Why I Want a Career in Trauma
Resident Winning Essay
T. Shane Hester, DO**

Starting my shift in the SICU, I get a report from my senior resident about a trauma patient they just finished operating on, “status post GSW to the abdomen, common iliac vein injury, colon injury, kidney injury....”. As he ran through the list of injuries he had encountered and the events in the operating room I was jealous. I started thinking to myself, “what a great case I missed, what an experience.” As the patient rolled into the unit it was clear that he was still very unstable. He had the complete triad: cold, coagulopathic and acidotic. He was bleeding from everywhere. “What was I going to do?”, I thought to myself. My seniors had worked so hard in the operating room to save this man, now it was up to me to continue the work.

“Doctor, his wife is here. Can she come back?”, a voice interrupted my thoughts. This man was dying in front of me, how could I let his wife come back? But this might be her last chance to see him alive. Reluctantly I agreed. Moments later a young woman walked down the hall. She was visibly shaken and unsure of what to expect. Then I noticed, she was pregnant. “Must be 7 months along” I thought to myself. Then it hit me, this “great case” has a family. I quickly tried to regain my composure as the young lady walked towards me. I tried to comfort her as best I could, while also describing the significance of his injuries and the very real possibility that he may not survive.

My time in the SICU that month came and went, but he stayed. I continued to follow him, checking on him and his wife daily. I discovered they had already had a child that was 3 years old, the same age as my daughter. I learned about his career, what he did for fun, the situation surrounding the horrific night of the shooting.

I learned something very important from taking care of this “great case”. No one is immune from trauma. Patients don’t have time to research their trauma surgeon, plan time off from work and notify their families what they are about to undergo. Trauma can happen to anyone and not only does it happen to the person laying on the gurney in front of you in the trauma bay, it happens to their friends and family.

Trauma surgeons have a unique ability to see people at their most vulnerable. Never sure what the night might hold, trauma surgeons have to be ready for anything and everything. From the “great save” to the “catastrophic injury”, trauma surgeons have tremendous highs and extreme lows on any given night. Despite this they must always stay centered, because they never know when the next “great case” will roll through the door; and they owe it to the patient and their family to give it everything they can to save their life.

The privilege of caring for a patient at their most vulnerable moment is something that is indescribable. I still keep up with my “great case”. He continues to do miraculously well and is actively involved in community projects and is a great inspiration to those around him; including this humbled young resident. Moments like this are what inspire me to want to pursue a career in trauma surgery.