

For Better or Worse

After a long week of working on the inpatient wards, I was looking forward to my day off. My first month of internship was exhausting. In addition to 10 to 12 hours of patient care each day, I was also juggling my new husband and his visiting mother. Savoring the anticipation of at least 8 hours of uninterrupted sleep, I snuggled down into my pillow top mattress and smiled.

From a dead sleep, I awoke to the sound of a frantic knocking at the front door. Anxiously, I elbowed my slumbering husband, urging him to investigate. He left to get the door and seconds later called for help. I struggled into my robe and quickly headed towards the door. Standing in our living room, with our dogs nervously circling her, was my mother-in-law with our neighbor from next door. Breathlessly, my neighbor screamed, "She won't wake up."

We hurried to her house where I discovered a woman's body on the living room floor. Before I could assess the situation, however, my husband yelled, "My wife is a doctor!" Oh God, I thought, I've only been "a doctor" for less than a month, and I certainly have no idea what to do in this case. Nevertheless, at 5 AM, I found myself in my neighbor's living room trying to help a stranger.

My husband and I performed CPR for 10 minutes while waiting for the ambulance to arrive. Some time during our attempts to resuscitate the woman, I noticed an elderly man stepping over the woman's feet to get into the kitchen. He proceeded to sit down at the table and nonchalantly eat a bowl of cereal. When the EMTs and police finally arrived, they were chased and pinned against their vehicles by my 2 dogs who had somehow escaped into the cul-de-sac during all the commotion. I screamed for them to get back in the house so that the EMTs could get to us. I couldn't help but think how ludicrous it seemed that life around us was blind to the tragedy unfolding before us.

By the time the sun rose, we stood on the front yard waiting for the medical examiner. Like any new intern, I was disappointed that I had failed to achieve the miraculous events witnessed on so many popular TV programs. The unglamorous truth is that I was also extremely disappointed that it occurred before dawn on my one day to sleep.

—Lara Briseño Núñez, MD
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WHAT WAS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE CODE BLUE?

Real-life stories are sometimes more bizarre than fiction, yet they leave us with a profound lesson about the unique and fragile balance between life and death and the role of medicine within this context.

In a few paragraphs (less than 700 words), send us your story of the most unusual, difficult, or humorous code blue (resuscitative effort) in which you were involved. Include any long-term reflections that you may have about the case, or share with us the humor of the moment. You may discuss an event that took place in your first days of residency or one that occurred just yesterday. The story may have taken place on a back road or in a hospital cafeteria. Whatever or wherever it was, we want to know.

Please send us your most interesting personal stories. Submissions should include the author's name, address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address if available. We'll maintain your anonymity if you wish. The best stories will be selected for publication.

Send your submission to: Code Blue, *Hospital Physician*
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