

## A Fatal Case of Nasal Drip?

On the General Medicine Floor

It was one of those rare, slow days during my cardiology elective. I'd just finished presenting our last consultation to my attending, so I took full advantage of the free time and did what any well-trained resident would do in my shoes: I sat in front of the closest computer to check my e-mail and get my daily dose of CNN. Suddenly, I heard one of my fellow family medicine residents being paged overhead with that infamous 4-letter word...STAT! Shortly after this announcement, there were STAT calls for anesthesia and the code team. I decided that at the very least I could provide moral support for my colleagues. So, I strolled down to the appropriate patient room where resuscitation efforts were already underway.

The patient was becoming notorious to members of our family medicine inpatient team. He was a gentleman in his 70s with severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and from what I could gather upon entering the room, he was on course for his fifth intubation in 2 months. He was visibly tachypneic and unresponsive.

Shortly after his intubation, the patient appeared to be destined for cardiovascular collapse. I alerted the team that his pulse was growing weaker, which was confirmed by the inability to measure a blood pressure without a Doppler. A rhythm strip revealed his heart to be in atrial fibrillation at a rate of roughly 120 bpm. IV fluids and a dopamine drip were started, but despite proper titration, the patient's blood pressure did not seem to be responding to our intervention. We needed another pressor...STAT!

The attending ordered the nearest nurse to grab a bag of Neo-Synephrine; she responded that the floor currently did not have this medication. Our efforts were

rapidly becoming futile. Suddenly, a young nurse on her first week of duty timidly stated that she thought she had seen some Neo-Synephrine "lying around" nearby. We beckoned her to retrieve the possible remedy to this patient's dire status.

A few minutes later, our young nurse scrambled back in triumph, eager to hand over this man's saving grace to the attending. I could not help but ponder on the lasting impression this day might have on an up-and-coming nurse, further confirming her calling into the healing profession. Surely, she had dreamt of similar situations during nursing school.

But inexperience reared its ugly head that day. Many of us have been maimed by it during our training; today, it would be no different for the newest member of our resuscitation team. The nurse hurried towards the attending and exclaimed with newfound confidence, "There you are doctor...I found the Neo-Synephrine." The team stared at the gift presented to us. After an awkward pause, I asked her where she had found it. She then said, "One of the nurses had some in her purse; she has really bad sinuses." On the nurse's palm lay a small bottle of *Neo-Synephrine Nasal Spray*.

I looked at the attending uneasily, as I was concerned that this nurse was about to endure a verbal beating. Instead, he looked up at her and, though visibly trying to hold back his laughter, said "Thank you, but this is not quite the medicine I was looking for." He gave us all a quick grin and arranged to transfer the patient to the ICU right away.

—Adam Dimitrov, MD  
Baltimore, MD

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