

A Little Louder, Please

In a Patient's Home

During medical school, I worked part-time for an ambulance service as an emergency medical technician. I saw a lot of code blues—some memorable, and some I would like to forget.

One of my most memorable codes occurred during a quiet Sunday afternoon. We were called to a home approximately 1 mile from our base. When we arrived, the police were already there and were pulling an elderly man, who was royal blue in color, off his bed. Working quickly, my partner and I established an airway, hooked up the electrocardiograph, and obtained intravenous access.

According to the monitor, the patient was in ventricular tachycardia and without a pulse. We performed defibrillation, but with no success—he was still in ventricular tachycardia. We repeated the defibrillation; this time he converted and began mumbling.

At first we could not understand what he was saying. But then he became louder, still mumbling. Finally, he screamed, “Don’t do that to me again!”

Fortunately, we didn’t have to.

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