

A personal note

Gabriela Suarez MD

12 pounds lighter, I am able to say that the MICU has by far been the most daunting rotation of my residency training. I think the hardest part for me was being confronted with the unexpected and the severity of illness of our patients. I know that many of my words will sound cliché despite my best efforts, but I'll share my experience regardless.

On my first night, a patient my age suffered from a cardiac arrest, we coded him 5 times that night. The moment I had to call a time of death, it felt like I got punched so hard in the stomach that it was hard to breathe. I went to the stairway to catch my breath as tears rolled down my cheeks. I kept asking myself, "What I am doing here?" The next night a patient my husband's age became brain dead. He, just as Mike, had no past medical history, in other words, he was not supposed to die. I remember sitting in my car after work not knowing what to do, thinking life was unfair, thinking there could have been something else I could have done. That day I called my mother and she said "Amorcita, don't fear death. You will look at it in the eye the rest of your life. Some battles you will win and some you will lose. Remember that when you lose it is not because you failed it will be because it was time for their bodies to rest. Death is part of life, just like nights are part of days." When I came back to work that night I found out that the family had decided to donate his organs. The picture below is from the transplant team taking the patients' organs to the helicopters waiting outside. I can't begin to describe all the emotions that I felt watching them walking down that hallway. I'll never forget one of the nurses saying, "Do you hear those helicopters?, they sound like the

wings of angels carrying life to another patient". That was exactly what it was; the life of our patient gave life to 3 other patients. I didn't win my battle, but 3 other patients did. In that moment I realized all that we go through is worth it!

I want to take the time to thank all the patients and their families because they taught me to be a better listener, a better healer, a better doctor. Thank you for putting your trust in me and teaching me that medicine goes beyond textbooks. I want to thank all the other residents, fellows and attending physicians for your support through all those intense nights, for your positive energy, team work and amazing friendship.

I would also like to thank all the amazing nurses that worked by my side and demonstrated endless care and interest for our patients. They have proven many times to be highly qualified, brilliant and one of the main reasons our patients improve.

Thank you all of supporting me when I was at my worst: burnt out, overworked, exhausted, and still learning.

Author Affiliation: Maria Suarez is a resident in Internal Medicine at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in Lubbock, TX.

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<p>Corresponding author: Gabriel Suarez, MD Contact Information: gabriela.suarez@ttuhsc.edu DOI: 10.12746/swrccc2016.0415.202</p>
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