

Reflections from ER

An Anxious Day

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I am an Emergency physician and seeing death is part of the deal. This is an account of imaginary narrative of a girl whom I pronounced death. This is how I would have felt if I were in her shoes. This is not sympathy or pity, this is me in her place.

I am 17 years old, I weigh about a 100 kilos and I study at a Cambridge school. I have everything in my life, an elder supportive sister and caring elder brother, a tall and handsome year younger baby brother. I weigh as much as they weigh altogether. Yep, that's a fact! As much as I try to cut my carbs I can't, I eat when am anxious and I am anxious all the time. My sister tells me I over react, may be I do, I want to control my reactions. I am designed that way... Well my elder brother is also concerned about my studies so is my dad, after all it is my O3; believe me I can't explain how worried I am myself. I can not concentrate enough which makes me worse. It is a vicious cycle I can not break.

Eight months back my doctor told me may be I am a bit hypothyroid and diabetic. I need to take medicines. I read hypothyroid people are depressed people but mom thinks I am attributing my self control to my illness. My illness is not serious. Tomorrow is my exam. I missed few doses in anxiety. My sister is helping me prepare but I feel very short of breath. I told them I can't study I am short of breath. After 4 hours of fighting breath I was taken to hospital but doctor said it is all anxiety, take a sedative and sleep, I will feel better. I feel worse at 6pm I tell my mother I can't breath please help. I beg them. I collapse. Ambulance is late as it is about *aftaar time. It takes 25 minutes to get to hospital. Different this time. Doctor who sees me turns to my sis, asks "how much time?" She is confused: "to what?" Doctor repeats, "How long she has been like this?" "May be 25 minutes there was no ambu-

lance" Doctor flinched, turned towards me and announced we will do everything she is too young to die. I realised I am dead. Someone starts pounding my chest, there is a lot of chatter. I can't understand. Things are blurring out. After half an hour I hear prayers called. It is aftaar time. Stop pounding my chest go do aftaar. They don't leave. Same doctor comes, puts a device on my chest and asks, "do all witness a standstill heart?", all say yes. She then says "Thank you everyone, let's call the code off! We did we could but it was already late!!! I will go to family prepare the body..."

I am pronounced death!
Just like that!
Why i am dead?
What happened?
Anxiety kills???
I was just 17 year old
I wanted to live...
Doctor come back I want to live, please...
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I wish I could change this, bring her back, even for a while, but things are not in the control of even doctors sometime, providence takes the hold and you just become the part of the engine. I hope reading this might change someone's approach to a young anxious patient. One should be sure about all red flags before labelling someone fit to leave your department. It takes only a minute to get a blood gas, few minutes to talk to the patient and only few hours to observe, if these hours are worth someone's life they are worth spending.

*Muslim tradition to open their fast.

