



Practice

Michael Conway Stacey, DS

Professor, Department of Vascular Surgery, McMaster University
Surgeon in Chief, Hamilton Health Sciences

Corresponding Author:

Dr Michael Stacey
Surgeon in Chief, Hamilton Health Sciences
237 Barton St East, Hamilton, Ontario, L8L 2X2, Canada
Email: staceymi at hhsc dot ca

Received: 29-MAY-2016

Accepted: 04-JUN-2016

Published Online: 10-JUN-2016

I
Saturday evening I don
my persona, focus my brain
 unplug the memory
stick
Swish of a puck, scraping of ice
 guttural cheers
 piles of beers
 entwined sleeping
bleary eyed rising
 first coffee of the day

Transition while driving
Review the last shift
Relive all the highlights
Akin to practice in training
Goal –
control amidst chaos,
 machines beeping,
people moaning, rushing, in tears
Threat –
the unknown, subconscious
anxiety, persistently undermining counter
poise, years
of training

Cite this article as: Stacey MC. Practice. RHiME. 2016;3:26-28.

Fluorescent waiting room
Familiar territory, scrubs, white coat
Signature stethoscope
Natural terrain, part of the tribe
Confidence returns
On guard for the unexpected

II

ER is packed, mayhem tonight
First, chest pain, heart attack
Young man, too young
Frightened wife
Develop a plan – make time to explain
Lacerations sutured, fractures splinted
Drunken youth, shouting, oblivious to all
By morning, wonder what hit them
With insight contrite, anger without

Next an overdose, dead on arrival
Listen - no heartbeat, warmth departing
Glance at his face – my heart skips a beat
Memories flood, young boys playing,
Carefree, future just dreams awaiting
Classmate from school, now departed
I connect with his spirit, farewell young friend
I linger, still dazed in the moment

III

Crash, front doors fly open
Voices shout, tension high
'Abdominal pain, no BP, call a code'
My brain finds another level
Time slows right down, senses focus
Observe all and orchestrate the players
Connecting leads, pumping the chest,
Fluids flowing, saline, "Get blood",
"Check rhythm, stand clear"
"Shock", limbs jolt,
"No rhythm, pump again"
"Call the time", 'three minutes'
"Epinephrine, calcium, bicarb"
"Check rhythm, stand clear"
"Shock, no rhythm, pump again"
Surgeons arrive, standby expectant
Uncertain, will they be needed
"Check, no rhythm, shock"
"No rhythm, no output"

“Call the code – cease pumping”
Surgeons disappear, soon the patient.
My brain floats back down
Take a breath, collect my thoughts
Seek out the family

IV

‘Doc can you see this one, he’s asking for you’
Waiting quietly in this maelstrom,
Familiar, a veteran of many visits
Young boy having chemo
I’ve not seen him so bad
His eyes grip me, I willingly attend
A thin voice, certain yet calm
‘I won’t leave here this time,
Please help my parents, they don’t think I know
Tell them it’s OK, they can talk to me
You’re the one who can help them’
Assenting in silence, I place my hand on his
Connect with his ravaged shell
Sadness envelopes us

V

Light overtakes darkness,
outside and in,
Remove the costume of this persona,
in transit
Review plans for Sunday
Akin to practice in training
Sleep, chores, BBQ,
laughter with friends
immersed in familiar
surroundings
At the driveway to my other
life
Before alighting,
I look down
A tear has stained my shirt

This Poem was part of a presentation at the conference on Humanities in Medicine –
“A Palpable Thrill” - that was held in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada on May 7, 2016.
