

LETTER TO EDITOR

“Dear Peers! Are You “Free to Learn” For Your Kin?”**Deepak Gupta**

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E Mail ID: dgupta@med.wayne.edu**Citation**

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I have stories to tell. More than a decade ago and ironically almost a decade after my graduation from medical school, I trained and got certified in basic life support (BLS) skills because I did NOT want to fail my family, my friends and my patients as I had desired to NOT fail my conscience as a physician. I will tell you this that you will never regret honing BLS skills whenever you will see the smiles on the faces of revived and you will never forget when not forgiven – by else and/or by self – for your reluctance in knowing what’s expected from you especially as a physician. Even though my natural desire to hone BLS skills was born in the times when it was NOT mandated, my free will to care for my family, my friends and my patients had always brought me back to BLS training centers for revisiting my skills again and again, years after years. Essentially, I have recognized Brain-Heart-Lungs as the Trinity of Life and hereafter I plead to all my peers irrespective of which stage of career they are in: “Please hone your BLS skills, at least be a Heartsaver®, for your kin so that when your kin, your beloved, needs your help, you don’t delay providing help compared to leaving “To go find one””

Letter

I have a story to tell. At the time when I was learning, graduating and then practicing medicine in India, it was NOT mandatory to hone skills and getting certified for basic life support (BLS) that primarily focuses on cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Although I had trained in anesthesiology and was trained to saving lives primarily by managing patients’ airways and their breathing, I was NOT confident about the comprehensiveness of my BLS skills because, like almost everyone else in my country during that time, I was NOT mandated to hone or get certified in BLS skills. With the unease enveloping my mind that whether I would be able to appropriately and timely help my family, my friends and my patients in case any such immediately critical need arises, I trained and got certified in BLS skills because I did NOT want to fail my family, my friends and my patients. However, after my

first certification in BLS skills more than a decade ago and ironically almost a decade after my graduation from medical school, I realized that it was all for my desire to NOT fail my conscience as a physician.

I have a story that I am NOT going to tell because I can NOT tell. It took a very long time to heal and I just do NOT want it to unseal. However, I will tell this that I am thankful for my desire to hone BLS skills becoming contagious. I will tell this that I am blessed considering my contagion infected my next-of-kin who are physicians themselves. And I will tell this that I still have nightmares about what our lives would have been if the contagious desire to hone BLS skills had NOT spread. Therefore, without opening the wounds of traumatic time endured almost a decade ago, I will tell this that you will never regret honing BLS skills whenever you will see the smiles on the faces of revived and you will

never forget when not forgiven – by else and/or by self – for your reluctance in knowing what’s expected from you especially as a physician.

I have a story that has grown closer to my heart. I had always wondered why we do NOT always like the jobs at hand. Forget about loving them, why do we, more often than not, end up hating them? One friend of mine showed me the light by asking me to explore Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s TEDTalk “Flow, the secret to happiness” (1) describing that in contrast to the desired “Flow” state wherein our challenges are appropriately matched to our skills, most of the time (and most of us) live in the unrealized “Apathy” state wherein neither our challenges nor our skills are what they supposed to be. Consequently, I discovered that even though the jobs at hand are essential to ensure the food on the tables, fun is always more important than food because, in all the tasks we do, fun is always the primarily sought subconscious goal as similar to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s definition and description of the “ecstatic state” called “Flow”. Correspondingly, Peter Gray’s personal experience with Sudbury Valley School (2) and his strong belief system advocating for reviving our natural freedom to desire for educating ourselves as documented in his book “Free to Learn: Why Unleashing the Instinct to Play Will Make Our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant, and Better Students for Life” (3) reinforced my resolve wherein even though my natural desire to hone BLS skills was born in the times when it was NOT mandated, my free-spirited will to care for my family, my friends and my patients had always brought me back to BLS training centers for revisiting my skills again and again, years after years. Finally, I have a story to close. With my evolved interest from being just a BLS provider to becoming a BLS instructor, an interesting thought popped into my head: How many experienced providers, directors and chairs of medical and surgical specialties and subspecialties will I be helping over the coming years to hone their BLS skills? How will I feel as a BLS instructor guiding those who all would have had taught me one-or-the-other aspect of medicine at some-or-the-other time-point during my existence as life-long-learner-physician? Will these leaders reach out on their own volitions realizing the need to test and, if needed, revive their BLS skills? A teacher recently shared an innuendo wherein when a BLS instructor enquired about the first step when encountering an unresponsive person, a physician’s response was “To get the nurse” and, in the absence of nurse’s immediate

availability, the response was “To go find one”. All jokes aside, even though it is always good to remember that the most important step is “To call for help”, I as a physician can NOT ignore the essential need for myself being an appropriate help when encountering an unresponsive person. Even though in the most modern healthcare facilities, the experienced providers, directors and chairs may never end up utilizing their personal BLS skills while wearing the hats of team leaders during resuscitations of unresponsive, apneic and pulseless patients, I have always – and immediately – offered my services as chest compressor reinforcing to my memory that high quality CPR during instinctive-and-appropriate BLS is always the most essential step for improving the chances for more complete survivorship in unresponsive, apneic and pulseless patients. I have always recognized Brain-Heart-Lungs as the Trinity of Life and hereafter I plead to all my peers irrespective of which stage of career they are in: “If you don’t worry about your licensing, don’t do it for regulatory authorities” (4); “If you don’t worry about your conscience, don’t do it for your patients”; “If you don’t worry about the incarceration, don’t do it for Michael Jackson” (5); however, “Please hone your BLS skills, at least be a Heartsaver® (6), for your kin so that when your kin, your beloved, needs your help, you don’t delay providing help compared to leaving “To go find one””.

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