



# A PATIENT I SHOULD HAVE CRIED OVER

**E**ight hours into my first weekend on-call, struggling to manage the workload, my jobs list getting longer as the day progressed and my bleep went off: 'Cardiac Arrest, Orthopaedic ward'. My heart sank. An hour later, I walked off the orthopaedic ward, Mr J having been pronounced dead.

Unfolding my jobs list and scrolling through the numerous bleeps I needed to return, I was struck by a wave of frustration and anger. I found myself thinking *'What a waste of time'*. However, wanting to be seen as professional and competent, I ignored the emotions and ploughed on. Not resting, not debriefing, and definitely not crying. My pride would not allow it, nor did anyone suggest it.

Once home, the anger returned; it felt like the anger was directed at Mr J. I wanted to blame him for causing me to fall so far behind at work, for the delay in Mrs B's analgesia, for an irritated family that had to wait to talk to me, and for my exhaustion. I was ashamed to be angry with a dead patient. Anger led to guilt and that led to self-pity.

Rested, and after talking to others, my emotions made more sense. Mr J was my first cardiac arrest. The resuscitation attempt

was messy and prolonged. It should never have happened as he should have had a DNACPR in situ. There was the root of my anger: rightly frustrated with the way in which this man had died.

By contrast, Jesus' actions confront the way I was thinking. He cried in public and shared in others' emotions. Throughout his ministry he demonstrated the importance of a good support network, sending out disciples in groups and keeping them with him at times of need. He readily asked for help and others to pray for him, setting an example to his apostles.

We see the same in his apostles, Paul's letters are full of requests for prayer. How much more then should we ask others for support and prayer? As Christians we should set an example by sharing our weaknesses and empowering others to share theirs.

I now discuss this experience with final year medical students before they start work; it ignites an honest conversation. I hope that it also helps them to ask to debrief, empowers them to cry and defends against burnout. By being vulnerable we strengthen those around us and allow others to strengthen us.

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