
Patient Communication Campaign Inspired by Near-Death Experience



In a new article, a critical care medicine physician from Henry Ford Hospital describes in great detail her near-death experience. The article, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, has resulted in a campaign designed to make healthcare professionals communicate more effectively and to be more empathetic towards their patients.

See Also: [What Can Psychologists Do in Critical Care?](#)

In the article titled "A View from the Edge: Creating a Culture of Caring", Rana Awdish, MD, Director of Pulmonary Hypertension Program at Henry Ford Hospital discusses how doctors fail patients in so many ways.

Dr. Awdish nearly died when a tumour ruptured in her liver. She suffered from a multi-system organ failure. The care team managed to save her and she recovered after five major surgeries and multiple hospitalisations. During this entire ordeal, Dr. Awdish explains that she experienced something quite unexpected - a feeling of casual indifference.

"I was privy to failures that I'd been blind to as a clinician," she says. "There were disturbing deficits in communication, dis-coordinated care, occasionally an apparently complete absence of empathy. I recognized myself in many of those failures."

Her experience as a patient made her realise several things and so she became a champion for developing a culture that would enable healthcare professionals to talk more effectively with their patients. Her primary message is that "everything matters, always. Every person, every time."

The Henry Ford hospital has a Physician Communication and Peer Support curriculum which is guided by empathy and compassion. It is geared towards developing an understanding of what matters to patients and how this information can be aligned with patient values. Some of the courses included in this curriculum are [CLEAR \(Connect, Listen, Empathize, Align and Respect\) conversations](#), a communication workshop, real-time shadowing and new-hire orientation.

According to Dr. Awdish, her experience as a patient taught her the importance of shifting her focus from an illness or disease to respecting her patients. She believes that this is the path to providing compassionate, coordinated care.

Source: [Henry Ford Health System](#)

Image Credit: Henry Ford Hospital

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