

A LIFE SAVED?

Last year I was called at 7:40 a.m. by the principal of an elementary school I am assigned to. (Starting time for me is around 8:30.) I was told that one of the teachers, Mr. H, was not feeling well. I talked to him on the phone and he denied chest pain or changes of consciousness but stated he just felt weird since about 2:00a.m. He had a history of hypotension in the past related to medication dose regulation. I instructed him to wait for me in the health room and to try and contact his PCP [primary care provider].

I arrived at school by 8:00a.m.; a half hour early. Again Mr. H denied chest pain or any other hallmarks of a cardiac event and he asked me not to call 911. He had a pale color compared to his usual skin tone. I took his vital signs and discovered he again had hypotension but, more importantly, his heart rate was 29 beats per minute and regular irregular. I was talking with his ARNP who had returned his call as I was finishing the vital signs and I cut our conversation short to call 911.

The EMS personnel arrived in 4 minutes from the time I called them. In two minutes Mr. H was on a monitor and his heart rate was now 24 beats per minute and his blood pressure was even lower. He was transported to the ER of his choosing and arrived at the hospital 20 minutes after I had called 911. As he was being rolled into the ER his heart stopped completely, however, the ER was ready for him and an external pacemaker deliberator was utilized and his heart was revived within seconds of stopping. Later he underwent a procedure to have an implanted pacemaker auto deliberator placed. Mr. H returned to work within a week of this incident.

If I had not responded to by coming into school a 1/2 hour early Mr. H would have experienced this serious cardiac event while insisting that he did not need professional intervention. By being there and using the Nursing Process to make the clinical decision to intervene by calling 911 against the wishes of Mr. H, he is still alive and well today and is teaching students in our school who are very appreciative of his level of care and concern for them as individuals.

In this case Professional Nursing Process resulted in the extension of Mr. H's life and continued contribution as a master educator to the children of the Seattle School District.

Reflection on this incident is particularly poignant to me, as I am being required to sell myself and [my] services to the schools I serve. How can the administration put a price on the life of an employee or student in our community? I am sure Mr. H is happy I took the initiative to come to school early the day his heart stopped.

I have said it before and will say it again: Our students and staff deserve to have a school nurse in every school - every day - all day long.

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