Thursday Memo – March 30, 2017

The Fog – by Kathy Maier

The fog had settled in. It was thick and gray and I was not able to distinguish anything in front of me. Every time a ray of light shined through, it disappeared as quickly as it came. It seemed like it was forever before the sunshine came through and clarity presented itself.

Anyone that knows me knows that I am a very positive individual. I always try to look for the bright side in everything. But even with that said, I am not immune to negativity. It is so easy to dwell on that one patient who yelled at you and just as easy to let the compliment or thank you slip through your fingers to never be seen again. I think we all have weeks, months and maybe even years where the negativity seems to overpower all else.

Lately, I have felt that negativity overcome every being of me. Every time I walked into a room or answered a phone call of a difficult patient, I found myself stiffening up and wondering "will this be another bad encounter?" I have tried everything to focus on the positive, but it seemed to get further and further from me and I could no longer see the glow. And then it happened, the sunshine poked through and more and more spokes kept seeping in until the fog fully lifted.

It was not one encounter that did it. It was mixture of understanding patients. As I found myself repeating the same sentences of why I don’t give antibiotics for a virus or why I don’t do benzos for general anxiety or why I don’t do opiates for that type of pain, I found more and more patients stating wow that makes sense. Or yeah you are right. But then I looked on my schedule and my heart started racing, my hands clammed up. I walked in expecting the worse from the patient and only got positivity.
“I want to read you something,” she said and as she read a quote from an article; she continued, "I know you been telling me all along that she suffers from anxiety and that there is no other medical cause for her symptoms, but I did not realize you were right until I read this." And as I sat there and spoke to both mother and daughter about anxiety and about options for her, I felt warmth and happiness go through me. We all knew it was going to be a tough road but now that we were all on the same page, we would be able to treat it a little bit better. And although it made me 30 minutes late for the rest of day, instead of angry patients for my tardiness, I received warmth and no worries from all of them. It is moments like these that really make me realize why I became a family doctor. And although, we will always have that patient that does not understand or the one that leaves our practice because we won’t give them what they want; we will also have that patient that will finally understand and listen and appreciate all that you do for them.

I am holding on to this day, this day of positivity where it seems all the 'rights' came and all the 'wrongs' disappeared. I am holding onto it to help me when the next fog appears because it will. And this time I will be ready with my memory of the shining light.