



Thursday Memo – February 11, 2016

I am Tremendously Grateful - by Missy Gleckel

I had originally set out writing a reflection about how National Women Physician's Day fell on my daughter's second birthday, which fell in the middle of my second year of residency while I was working inpatient nights. But the week took some unexpected turns and I'm left reflecting from a more complex and multi-dimensional angle on what all of this means.

The weekend after the second birthday/NWPD collision. I arrived at the hospital for an overnight on FMIS and something told me to look at the OB board. There, I found a continuity patient of mine who had been due earlier in the week and for whom I had been waiting to be called. But there she was, admitted and I hadn't been called, so I started to feel slighted and opened the last note. It was from 3 minutes prior, the OB attending confirming an IUFD at term.

It was a tornado of how can I be there for her/what happens now/what did I miss/how can I comfort her/should I have induced her any of the 3 times in the last week that she begged me to without being able to cite any reason, just that she was nervous, but without being able to cite any reason, I couldn't justify the risks. And after the tornado settled, it was just pain and guilt like the sheer side of a cliff without hand or foot holds, wondering how the hell I got here in the first place. And then, it was a sea of tears, mostly hers and his, but also mine as I watched her bravery during delivery and laid her daughter on her chest. And now, it is a dull hum of sadness mixed with self-doubt and wanting to escape something that is permanently with me.

But where this weekend and NWPD/birthday intersect is this: I am not alone. The support I have received as news reached other residents (who texted me or came to find me in the hospital in the middle of the night) and faculty, who have sent e-mails, called, sought me out in clinic and given me very special reading material, has overwhelmed me. It is an intense and immense job to be entrusted with people's lives and their well-being and most days, I'm both humbled and overwhelmed by the privilege. But living through these pinnacles and valleys is hard to explain to anyone who isn't in it. And this is the magic of not having to.

From everyone who made it possible for me to pump during first year or all of the times people have babysat so I could go to the hospital or have covered a couple of hours for me so I could be a mom or have asked to see pictures or listened to boring baby stories or have made their events baby-friendly or have given me a pass on being a terrible friend because I have missed so many social opportunities; I am cared for as part of a community of physicians that have created an invisible webbing to keep me afloat. I can be sad and stressed and overwhelmed and find

emotional support at every turn, as well as hugs and laughs and reminders that we're in this together. We're caring for patients as part of a team and being part of the team inherently cares for us as well. I feel like my quest to care for the community is backed by my community caring for me, especially when providing care threatens to overtake everything else in life. And for that, I am tremendously grateful.