



*This is a resident case log of a patient encounter in which
an "Aware Medicine topic" was central.*

Treat Patients As You Would Want Your Mother Treated

During my time on the OB wards, I had an experience that truly taught me the importance of good patient care. I was in the middle of a busy night with several pending deliveries and 3 patients to assess in triage. One of those patients was a young, anxious multiparous woman who was coming in with contractions. Before I entered the room, I had quickly reviewed her chart and new the basics of her past medical and OB histories as well as why she had come in that night. My mind created the quick checklist of information that I needed to gather to assess the patient and I entered the room, ready to "talk" to this expectant mother.

I hurriedly introduced myself as the resident and immediately started into a rapid-fire interview to complete that mental checklist. Within several minutes of meeting the patient, I was laying her back on the bed and performing a cervical exam. It couldn't have been a more cold, sterile encounter. I was already thinking about the rest of my responsibilities as I mechanically explained that her cervix wasn't changed but since she was contracting and lived more than an hour away that we would keep her for several hours and recheck her cervix. I left the room, following my mind which had already left the room several minutes prior.

After seeing a few more triage patients and checking in with the laboring mothers-to-be on the floor, I returned to check on the patient in triage. Before I entered the room I asked the triage nurse how things were going. She told me that her contractions had increased and that she looked more uncomfortable. As I was getting ready to go reexamine the patient, the nurse informed me that the patient requested that someone else check her cervix. I was taken aback. Being new to the OB scene, I wondered what I had done to offend this patient. As I reflected, I realized how rushed I had been with the patient and how she must have felt to have that type of energy in her state of anxiety.

The patient ended up staying as her increased contractions had indeed caused cervical changes. I took the opportunity to reintroduce myself to the patient and spend some time getting to know her and her husband. Once I treated her with the attention and compassion that she deserved, her attitude towards me completely changed and she told me that she wanted to deliver before morning so that I could be involved in her birth. It was a very special feeling to be a part of this birth, especially after our rocky start. The whole experience taught me just how important it is to take that deep breath before each patient in order to clear your mind and be totally present for each patient encounter. Not only does it improve the patient's experience, but it also is critical to developing a healthy doctor-patient relationship.