



SKETCHES FROM THE FRONT LINES

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Ontario Medical Association Physician Health Program is pleased to collaborate with Dr. Jillian Horton on this project. Conveying physician experiences and narratives during the COVID19 pandemic serves to document experiences and share powerful narratives for a profession at a time when full focus is on doing the job, taking care of patients and each other.

If you are a physician, resident or medical student in Ontario and you would like support please call or email confidentially 1-800-851-6606
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I'M
A FIRST-YEAR
GENERAL SURGERY
RESIDENT AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF
OTTAWA.

MY NAME IS
BEN FUNG.

I WAS BORN IN
NOVA SCOTIA, GREW
UP IN **MARKHAM**, WENT
TO THE **UNIVERSITY
OF TORONTO**.

"THERE WAS DEFINITELY A MOMENT FOR ME IN
FEBRUARY WHEN EVERYTHING GOT REAL. IT
WAS A CONVERSATION WITH MY STAFF DOCTOR.

I HAVE TO LEAVE
EARLY TODAY FOR A MEETING
ABOUT OUR ICU'S ECMO*
CAPABILITIES.

OH, **INTERESTING!**
WHY IS THERE AN ECMO
MEETING?

IT'S FOR WHEN
THE COVID PATIENTS
ARE HERE.

"I WAS STRUCK
BY HIS LANGUAGE.

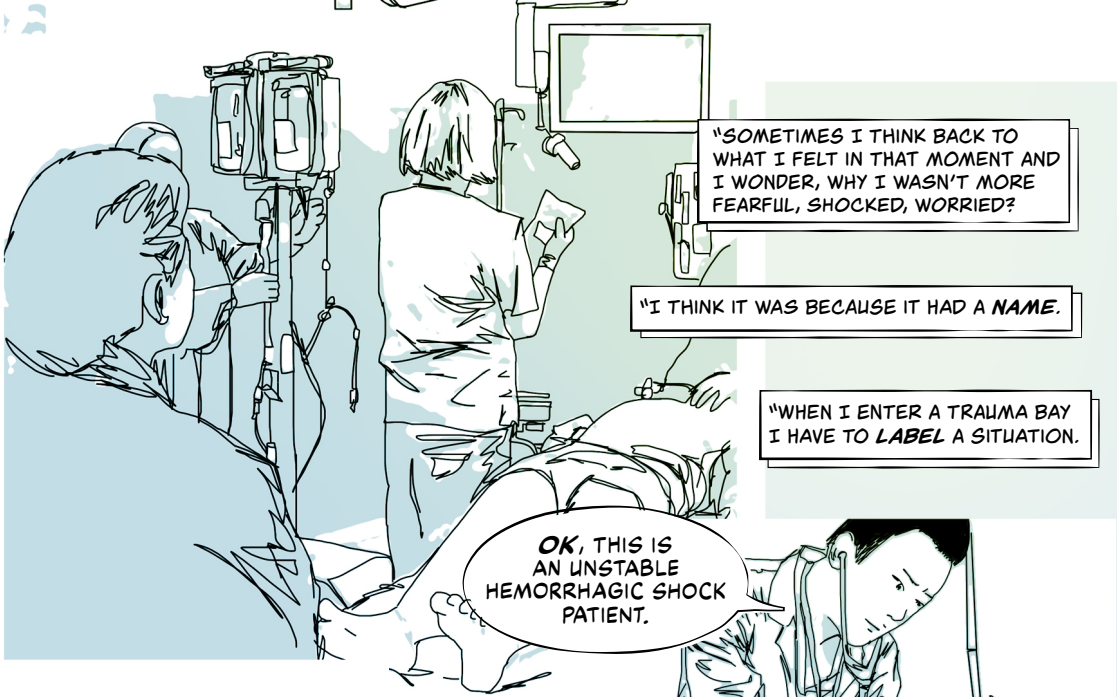
WHAT DO YOU MEAN
WHEN?

*EXTRA CORPOREAL MEMBRANE OXYGENATION,
SIMILAR TO CARDIOPULMONARY BYPASS

"I THOUGHT IT WAS AN "IF"

IT'S
INEVITABLE
THAT IT WILL GET
HERE, BEN.

"I HADN'T UNDERSTOOD IT UNTIL **THAT**
MOMENT. NOT "IF" BUT "WHEN". WE
WERE GOING TO BE FACING A **PANDEMIC**."



"SOMETIMES I THINK BACK TO WHAT I FELT IN THAT MOMENT AND I WONDER, WHY I WASN'T MORE FEARFUL, SHOCKED, WORRIED?"

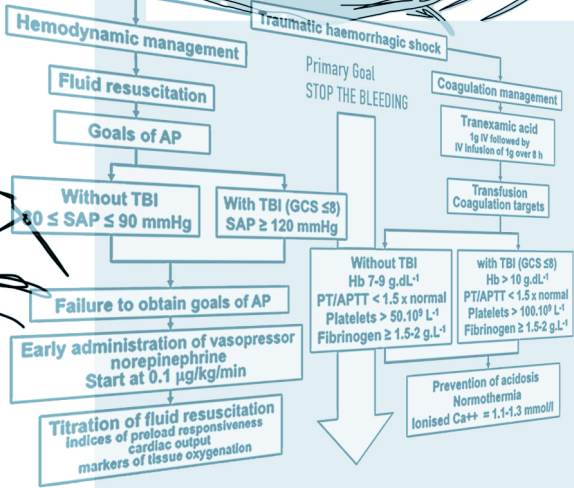
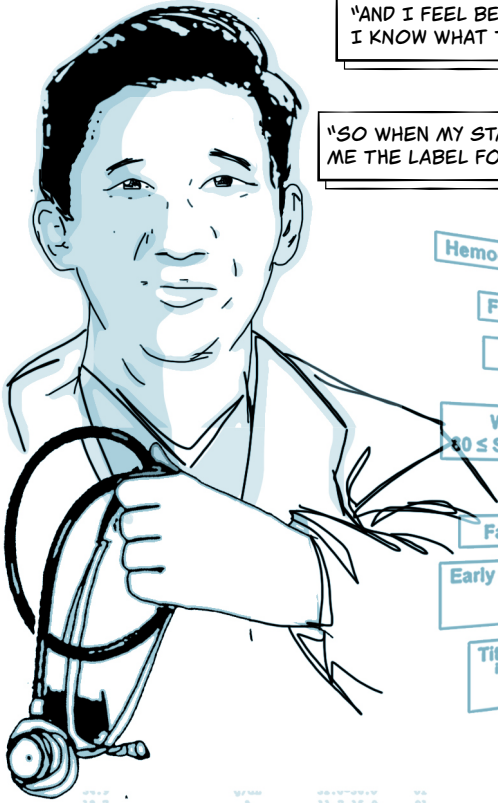
"I THINK IT WAS BECAUSE IT HAD A NAME."

"WHEN I ENTER A TRAUMA BAY I HAVE TO LABEL A SITUATION."

"OK, THIS IS AN UNSTABLE HEMORRHAGIC SHOCK PATIENT."

"AND I FEEL BETTER BECAUSE I KNOW WHAT TO DO."

"SO WHEN MY STAFF GAVE ME THE LABEL FOR COVID..."



"I STARTED TO THINK OF IT LIKE A TRAUMA. WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?"

"BUT...WHAT DO I NEED TO DO? I DON'T HAVE A COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK FOR THIS. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MY RESIDENCY? NOBODY KNOWS."



"IT LEAVES YOU WITH COMPLETE DISEQUILIBRIUM."

"HERE'S ANOTHER THING. MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY ASK ME, "ARE YOU ON THE FRONT LINE?" WHAT DOES THAT *MEAN?* DOES THAT MEAN, AM I IN THE *ER?* I TELL THEM I'M *NOT* IN THE ICU AND ER AND I'M NOT DEALING WITH COVID PATIENTS EVERY DAY.

"AND I FEEL KIND OF LIKE AN *IMPOSTER*, BECAUSE I'M RECEIVING AN OVERWHELMING AMOUNT OF PRAISE AND SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS, FAMILY, COLLEAGUES THAT I DON'T *NORMALLY* GET. IT FEELS *UNDESERVED*."

Recognizing Our Healthcare Heroes

Thank You to Nurses
Our front Line Heroes

Unsung heroes: Actions that do not make the headlines

THANKS SO MUCH FOR YOUR SERVICE, BEN!

Letter: Thank you to our health care heroes

PANDEMIC
RESPONSE UNIT

"I DON'T THINK OF MYSELF AS A HERO, BUT RIGHT NOW I'M ACTUALLY *LESS* OF A "HERO" THAN I NORMALLY AM.

"NORMALLY I OPERATE ON PATIENTS, MAKE DIAGNOSES, TAKE OUT CANCERS, GO TO CLINICS, SIT ON THE BED NEXT TO PAITENTS, REASSURE, EXPLAIN...WELL, NOW I CAN'T DO *ANY* OF THOSE THINGS.

"SO NOW, NOT ONLY AM I *RECEIVING MORE* PRAISE--WHAT I WOULD NORMALLY DO TO DESERVE THAT PRAISE I'M NOT EVEN *DOING*."

"WE HAD A CASE THE OTHER DAY. ANOTHER SERVICE CALLED US ABOUT A PATIENT WHO HAD SUSPECTED COVID."



"I JUST HAD A LOOK AT THE IMAGES, AND JUST GOING THROUGH THE RADIOLOGY REPORT--HER APPENDIX IS COMPLETELY NORMAL. I THINK IT'S AN INCIDENTAL FINDING."

YES, WELL I WANT YOUR OPINION AFTER YOU SEE THE PATIENT



OK, I HEAR YOU, BUT WITH THE CONCERNS ABOUT HER HAVING COVID I JUST THINK THAT--

CLICK

MY TEAM AND I WERE SILENT.

NONE OF US WANTED TO SEE THAT PATIENT.

GUYS, IT'S MY TURN. I'LL SEE THEM.



NOPE. I'M THE SENIOR. I SHOULD DO IT.



"SO IN THE END THE SENIOR RESIDENT TOOK CARE OF IT. THAT SHOULD HAVE MADE US FEEL BETTER BUT THE OPPOSITE WAS TRUE.



"I DROVE HOME AND I FELT AWFUL. I ALSO RECOGNIZED A LOT OF SHAME--BECAUSE THE TRUTH IS...I WAS WORRIED ABOUT CATCHING COVID MYSELF.

"I FELT LIKE THAT'S AN AWFUL THING, I'M A DOCTOR-- IT'S MY JOB--YOU THINK, I'M SURROUNDED BY HEROES RUNNING TOWARDS THE FRONT LINES. AM I THE ONLY ONE WHO EVER THINKS ABOUT RUNNING THE OTHER WAY? YOU QUESTION YOUR IDENTITY.



"FOR ME, THAT WAS A MOMENT TO SAY TO MY FEAR, I SEE YOU. TO GIVE FEAR A NAME. TO KNOW THAT EVERYONE IS FEELING IT RIGHT NOW.

"I THINK THE MOST HEROIC THING IS ACTUALLY WHEN WE ACKNOWLEDGE AND WORK IN THE FACE OF THAT FEAR.



WHEN WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE ARE PEOPLE WITH FEARS AND ANXIETIES... WHO WORK IN SPITE OF THEM.



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