

how we would pull this off. Our hospital is no different than yours. We are overcrowded and underfunded. Most of our ED beds are often full of admitted patients because there is no room for them on the wards. Needless to say, we had no protocol for this specific request. I asked the nurse in charge to make it happen and within 20 minutes, the porter was at Jim's bedside to take him to his wife's side. Behind the scenes, the ward nurses had made room for Jim; admitting agreed to forgo their usual admitting protocol until Jim was reunited with his wife; the porter made himself immediately available; and Jim got his wish.

Jim left the ED. Our day continued: the usual chaos, routine complaints and regular customers. My involvement with Jim and his family haunted me that day. I scanned the paper daily in the following week looking for his obituary. It appeared 5 days later—"Rogers, Carol and Jim died peacefully together as they lived, after a short illness"—not nearly enough of the story. I had to find out what happened after the ED.

Jim was admitted to the same room as his wife. Carol had died while Jim was in the ED. Jim didn't get that part of the story right. Jim was semiconscious when he arrived in the room. He wanted to hold Carol and lay with her as he died.

He was placed in the same bed and held his wife of 60 plus years as he lapsed into unconsciousness. His family was gathered at the bedside. They were happy. Happy for both their parents. Happy in their death. I know Carol and Jim were happy in each others arms. Jim died 12 hours later.

I shared their happiness. I had a sense of peace, fulfillment and accomplishment seldom felt in other patient encounters. The irony of this is that it was announced in an obituary, not a thank-you card or letter. I felt that I had shared in a magical, spiritual God-created moment with Carol and Jim. I felt diminished and insignificant. I reflected on our Creator, his plan for our lives and the role we as healthcare providers sometimes play in this plan. I was reminded that we are indeed privileged to care for people in their time of need, to touch them physically and emotionally. Jim and Carol touched me back.

Thank you for this gift. It will help me as a physician and as a person. Rest in peace, Carol and Jim.

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Erratum

The title of a Commentary published in the September 2005 issue of *CJEM* contained an error. It should have read "Needed: a commitment to basic training in emergency medicine teaching".¹

Reference

1. Frank J. Needed: a commitment to basic training in emergency medicine training. *Can J Emerg Med* 2005;7:328-9.