

4:44

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“Time can't help me anymore,”

He told me, in our last conversation on the floor.

Let me rewind and bring you back to the time when my resident and I

Went to say hello. We was admittin' an 88-year-old man when he was gettin' an echo

Check it yo this dude, came in confused, he was short of breath

He was A&O x 2, but he played it cool, wasn't feelin' vexed

Then my resident and me, talked about him, got worried so we, called up his PCP

He said, "so this is Mr. Z. I had a hunch, 'cause in last month, it wasn't lookin' good

On his CBC.

I think, he has either myelodysplasia or AML"

I'm thinkin', 'what the hell?' He does have weakness and fatigue

But to think he has sudden onset cancer I just couldn't believe.

We did our due diligence, like proper academia

And we diagnosed him, with acute myelogenous leukemia.

I wish that was the saddest part

All this man had was heart,

One that had an ejection fraction of 10-15%

Plus one kidney history renal cell carcinoma status post left nephrectomy

4+ bilateral lower extremity pitting edema.

I swear this man was stuck in between a, rock and a hard place

He lived alone, wife passed away, siblings alive he doesn't know where they stay, son the next state over

But estranged.

“What's his code status?”

His healthcare proxy was his friend, we meet him - chemotherapy, something we should begin?
DNR/DNI, hospice.

I go in alone again that afternoon and feel like I'm in a dream.

He's A&O x3, tellin' me tales 'bout growing up in East Germany.

Father in WWII, he got enlisted at 16 and a half

His wife's brother-in-law was a Russian helpin' the Allies,

Got sent from England to Worcester.

“Why do you think so many Russians are in Worcester?”

He came over at 28. Sounded like shit was goin' great

Then he say, “coming to this country was my biggest mistake,

But time can't help me anymore.”

He went deeper into his past for me

Told me 'bout his jobs, workin' in factories.

How he lost his strength overnight

I'm sittin' in my position trippin' up in his vision thinkin' and wishin'

This isn't right, this is blasphemy.

The convo ended. I'm headed down, with thoughts of leukemia, and my grandfather

About to admit a patient with autoimmune hemolytic anemia, and my resident sends a text

“Mr. Z is in v fib, he's going to die soon”
I turn to my intern, feel my bowels churn, show her the text
In a instant we be movin'. I type, "soon as in minutes?" I hit send.
On the way up my intern asks, "have you ever pronounced?"
----"no, what does that mean?"
"Pronounced death." She tells me 'bout the steps
I barely remember what my senior said.
I'm thinkin', 'oh shit
We was just talkin' 'bout East Germany, now what the hell do I remember 'bout v-fib?'
We get to the top, no stops, my attending readin' an EKG strip.
I turn to the patient's room, see my resident's look,
I realized I wasn't the only one who felt shook.
The first two words she said, were, "he's dead"
I go closer to the room, my fellow comes out
Unknowingly, he repeats her. "He's dead"
The team convenes in a private room. I stare at the ground to comprehend what this means
I barely remember what my seniors said.
I'm offered a chance to stay out of the pronouncement
I appreciate it but how the hell could I stay out when I poured every ounce in?
I put the diaphragm of my stethoscope on Mr. Z's chest
I hear something, it's abnormal, I pause and think
'What the hell is going on?' I stop and blink.
Someone says, "PEA." I show ignorance by silence. They said, "pulseless electrical activity"
We continue the exam. His radial pulses are thready
Brainstem reflexes absent
All the while, I wonder why this happened.
I get dismissed
I walk slowly... with. My head. Down.
Turn around, when approached separately by two female med students who know me
superficially
Each of them ask, "hey, how are you?" while moving past me, superficially
I get to my car and call 5 of my closest people
They help me get through every obstacle.
No one picks up
Chances of that are near impossible.
I stare at the hospital
Questions galore
Breath in a fall New England air, lookin' for an answer, I implore
I keep hearing in my head
“Time of death: 4:44”
So much here left unsaid
But time can't help me anymore