“I Am His Safe Haven…I Know”: A Mother’s Perspective

After sending out last months article to colleagues for review and editing, I received the most humbling reply from a mother of a child with newly diagnosed autism. She is also a perianesthesia nurse and educator. She offers her perspective, mainly as mother, but also with experience as a nurse. I have changed the names as a courtesy and have her blessings to share this with all of you, her colleague’s:

*This made me cry…*

*Thank you for helping bring awareness.*

*This is helpful for any patient with a sensory issue.*

*>What comforts your child? I pray and am hopeful one day this is asked and that the parental response and request is respected...*

*I cannot speak for others, only for Daniel.*

*I would answer this question with "me". I am his safe-haven and comforter. Please, please let me be waiting…*

*I know there will be less biting, less restraining, less sedating medication, less trauma for him and stress for the RN if I could be the voice and presence when coming from under.*

*I have been there, experienced it from being at bedside and then being called to bedside because someone else could "take care of it without me".*

*I turned against acquaintances and co-workers because "I know". I know as a mother and as a nurse, I know what can and cannot be avoided. I wanted to shout "I told you he needed me to be here! I told you not to hold him down!" But I didn't, I just talked to him as tears rolled down my cheeks.*

*I lost so much respect.*

*Nurses are quick to restrain while shouting "calm down". You and I have both witnessed it. I am guilty. I am learning through humility with my own child, how to be sensitive to the needs of others...*

*In the case of sensory issues, different situation but relatable, imagine telling a drowning person to not be panic-stricken. "I can pull you out from the water if you just stop kicking and reaching" "you will float, just stop panicking" "stop feeling as if you are out of control and cannot catch your breath" "just stop, just calm down".*

*My anxiety comes from knowing the anxiety my child will experience.*

We all need to be looking at our practices when caring for patients with sensory issues like Daniel. Do you have a designated “sensory room?” Are you planning ahead to accommodate noise and changes in work-flow”? Are your practices so rigid that you are unwilling to individualize your care for these patients? I sincerely hope not. Let’s be our patients advocate.

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