

# A Day in the Operating Room

Mohammad Faisal Memon ( 4th Year Student, Baqai Medical University, Karachi. )

After the second lecture Mi, the group leader, comes and tells us that we have to go to the operation theatre today. So I grab my OT dress and head for the hospital. I want to be the first one in so that I can get a good place to observe the surgery. We have to bring our own OT dresses. The hospital does not provide them for the students. I wait in the surgeons lounge as the students slowly pour in. There are two groups of around fifteen students each posted in the surgery ward for two months. I'm in group A which consists of seven Maldivians, two Americans and four pure blooded Pakistanis. We're assigned to Dr. Fawad (real name withheld for security reasons). The other group is assigned to Dr. Ahrned (again real name withheld for security reasons). if one of the surgeons is absent then both groups are combined. All thirty of us are squashed together to take histories and listen to lectures which sometimes seem to have no end. At times there are five to six students at a bed, grilling the patients with questions for so called histories, which we have to present to teachers every now and then to protect our butts from being burnt on fire.

I enter the operation theatre with one or two other students. Dr. Fawad is seated on a stool. The patient is on the operating table waiting to be given spinal anesthesia. We are informed that the surgery is a transvesical prostatectomy. Before any of us can think. Kiran volunteers herself to assist in the surgery and quickly gets scrubbed and comes back. She asks for permission to give the spinal anesthesia and proceeds with the procedure as all of us look on thinking that it could have been us assisting with the surgery. Dr. Fawad gets scrubbed and enters the scene. I get a good position from where I can observe the surgery clearly. Students continue to pour in. When the room seems quite full we are informed that Dr. Ahmed is not there and that's why there are so many students in the OT. Another thing we are informed of is that the A/C is not working. Soon it becomes stuffy and I take off my mask. We're hoping that the patient doesn't die of suffocation.

Mohsin who had gone to Bahawalpur is here in the OT for the first time. He didn't have his own OT dress and had to secretly borrow one from a surgeon. Dr. Fawad tests the spinal anesthesia by pinching the patient with some forceps and PLOP! Mohsin goes down. I've never seen a guy faint before. Ali tries fanning Mohsin with his hand while Tariq lifts his legs to increase the circulation to his brain. Mohsin is carried off to the lounge and Dr. Fawad tells us to leave the surgery room if we feel faint and not to wait to faint. We'll surely remember that Dr. Fawad.

The surgery begins. The incisions are made. I realize that my wonderful observatory position is not that wonderful, so I go grab a stool and stand on it. I now have a full view of the whole room and of the patient.

I notice some students gazing away, not able to observe the procedure due to the over crowding. I think of DOW and SMC which have around 600 students and I wonder what they do. Dr. Fawad explains the procedure, "We open the bladder by putting a finger in the urethra and enucleate the prostate by pushing forwards and . . .blah blah". I get to see the inside of the bladder and feel fortunate to be seeing all this from a good vantage point. But the surgery seems to go on and on and on. The room is congested and I notice some students secretly leave. I wait for the right moment and when Dr. Fawad is not looking, I make a break for it.

Outside it feels fresh and cool. Some of my friends are in another operating room and I decide to go there. They are posted in ENT and are observing a laryngoscopy. As soon as I enter the guys start going "why are you here" and "go back to your own ward", but the girls are nice and friendly. The guys don't let me see inside the laryngoscope and I leave, hoping to get back at them some day.

Again outside. Amna, Mona and Tariq have also left the prostatectomy and are seated on a bench. Tariq has a unique dark green OT dress. I like grandnother. a designer. sewed it for him. Amna is also wearing

a custom made long sleeve, less-revealing OT dress. She had hers sewn in America. We get into a conversation of USMLE, books, life and the uncertain future of medical students. Somebody comes and tells us that the surgery is almost over and we hurry back into the room. We're lucky no one observed our absence. ZIP, the patient is all sutured up and we head back to the lounge to receive the post-op lecture by Dr. Fawad.

We're all seated lazily on the sofas of the lounge, being taught post—op patient management. Half of us seem asleep. The other half just blindly nod their heads as if they are understanding every word that the doctor is saying. We're reminded of our ward test which is soon to come. That will be followed by another ward and another ward test. And then another and then another. The prof will come. Another ear will start. Soon we'll graduate and look for a good residency. Some will give the MLE. others will give other exams. And then more exams and exams and exams.

### **International Conference of Kuwait University Faculty of Medicine**

An International Conference of Coronary Heart Disease in the New Millennium: Issues in Preventive Diagnosis and Management will be held in Kuwait city between March 26-28, 2001. Further information can be had from Conference 2001, Department of Pathology, Faculty of Medicine, Kuwait University, P.O. Box 24923 Safat, 13110 Kuwait, Tel. No.: (965) 531 9476; Fax: (965) 5318454; E-mail: chd2001 @hsc.kuniv.edu.kw, Website: <http://hscwww.kuniv.edu.kw/HSC/CONF/Coronaryconfer.htm>.