

## **The Catholic Doctor is In: The Amazing Blessings of Being in Healthcare**

In 1973 I was finishing my junior year in mechanical engineering at Purdue University when, out of the blue, a Professor by the name of Frank Incropera asked me to spend the summer doing a research project involving biomedical engineering and open heart surgery in canines. Little did I know that this would change my life forever? It was during this summer that I had my epiphany that I did not belong in the engineering world. I wanted to be a doctor. With a little luck and a lot of prayers, I was accepted into the 1974 medical school class at The Ohio State University.

I realized fairly early on in my medical career that being a physician gave me not only tremendous responsibilities but also great opportunities. Opportunities every day and sometimes every hour to make a difference. With the graces given to me by our Creator, I have been thankful for the knowledge and skill I have developed to diagnose and treat various disease processes that cause not only physical suffering but also emotional distress in my patients. Even more so, I cherish the sacred interaction that occurs between a patient and doctor behind that closed office door. The stories I have heard, the secrets revealed, the tears that have flowed, the joys that been shared, have touched my soul.

Catholic physician and Saint Gianna Molla said: We “are afforded a privilege not available even to priests. Doctors are called to bring God into situations where priests are not able to assist. They work with priests who are ministers of God. They work with human being who are created in the image of God. Doctors are present during the most sacred moments in life. Never forget this!” I believe this with all my heart and soul. For the times I have been too busy and behind, too tired, or too selfish to minister to my patients, I am truly sorry to have missed those opportunities.

The landscape of delivering medical care is drastically changing. It is unfortunate that your family doctor or internist rarely takes care of you anymore when you are sick and in the hospital. Continuity of care has been trumped by a hospitalist or physician assistant working a 12 hour shift, doing his or her best just to get through a long list of patients to see each day. This is why the rest of healthcare workers need to step up and shine as well. On more than a few occasions, I have been told by patients that they didn't think much of the doctor that they had in the hospital but that the nursing staff was very loving and nothing short of incredible. Or the story about a caring respiratory therapist who appeared in the middle of the night like an angel to administer a much needed breathing treatment to a man in respiratory distress and then held his hand until the crisis was over. A physical therapist who gave a trauma victim encouragement and hope that they would someday walk again.

At Lutheran Hospital where I do most of my inpatient work, there is a team of very skilled nurses called the PIC team. These highly skilled nurses are usually called when chronically ill patients run out of peripheral veins to place IV's. They find and puncture deep and hidden veins advancing long tubes into the central veins near the heart. They must be guided by their guardian angels because they always have a gentle touch, a smile, and a genuine caring attitude towards every patient I see them treat and minister to, and I can't remember a time they were not successful in placing the PIC line.

The medical technicians, nursing assistants, dieticians, kitchen staff, therapists and even housekeeping in the hospital get opportunities to minister to the sick and these should not be missed. It really IS the little things. We are frequently told from the pulpit on Sunday to strive to be saints. If you are a healthcare worker you are probably given more opportunities than the great majority of vocations to emulate Jesus and live out your faith each day at work.

As it says in Romans 12:6-8, "We have gifts that differ according to the favor bestowed on each of us. One's gift may be prophecy; its use should be in proportion to his faith. It may be the gift of ministry; it should be used for service. One who is a teacher should use his gift for teaching; one with the power of exhortation should exhort. He who gives alms should do so generously; he who rules should exercise his authority with care; he who performs works of mercy should do so cheerfully." It IS the year dedicated to mercy after all!

We healthcare workers have been given such a great opportunity by our vocation. I pray that I, my physician colleagues, and all those in the healthcare industry are up to the challenge.

*Dr. Dave Kaminskis is a cardiologist at Lutheran. He serves as treasurer of the Dr. Jerome Lejuene Catholic Medical Guild of Northeast Indiana ([www.fortwaynecma.com](http://www.fortwaynecma.com)).*

*Reprinted with permission from Today's Catholic newspaper, Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.*