



“... for the secret of the care of the patient is in caring for the patient.”

—FWP

Jeremy A. Ross, MD

A Blessing

If I listened carefully from my bedroom, I could hear the garage door opening. It had been hours since my mother declared “lights out,” but, as always, I did my best to stay awake until my dad was home. I was 5 years old.

Dad was rebuilding his oncology practice from the ground up. His schedule consisted of hospital rounds, inpatient consultations, a full day of seeing patients in his office, and then more time in the hospital. Dad would be gone by the time I was up for school in the morning. He would take off only one weekend each month. He was often absent from family activities, notably missing my one and only no-hitter in Little League baseball. Even when he was home, his medical practice often required his attention. When paged, he would respond promptly and leave for the hospital when necessary.

I often sat with Dad in his office while he completed case dictations. I would peer curiously at the books on his shelves. Dad, a lifelong admirer of Sir William Osler, had a second-hand collection of Osler's textbooks that were dusty and ragged from decades of use by doctors of the past.

During one winter storm, driving was impossible, so Dad walked from home to see all of his patients at several hospitals. That degree of commitment is almost unthinkable among today's physicians. Indeed, Dad is one of an increasingly rare breed for whom the patient always comes first. He has always been a doctor's doctor, tirelessly devoted to his patients and to the art and science of medicine.

Even though our time together was limited, my admiration for Dad grew with each passing year. I wanted to make a difference in the world, as he was doing. Initially, I had no plans to follow in his footsteps, and he never encouraged me to do so. I had his support in whatever career I might choose. As I pursued different interests, medicine remained a possibility. I started a successful software company, but to continue to build it would have closed the door on any career in medicine. I thought often of Dad and slowly came to understand that we had a shared purpose—a shared destiny. I made the decision to try my hand at my father's trade.

Residency training was the happiest and most fulfilling time of my life. I had found my calling. It enabled me to take the skills that I had honed in the business world and apply them to a more gratifying purpose. Like Dad, I believe that we should use our gifts and skills to serve our patients in the best way that we can.

Over time, I have come to understand that Dad was drawn toward his patients not simply out of obligation, but by the honor and privilege of caring for people during the most difficult times of their lives.

Dad has always said that he doesn't treat cancer; he treats *patients* who have cancer. His mindset confirms a fundamental principle of our profession and will serve as the foundation of my medical practice. My goal is to use his inspiration to create my own legacy in the field of oncology.

For this and so much more, thank you, Dad. You are a blessing, and I am immensely grateful for all that you do for mankind. Peabody would be proud of you, and so would Osler.

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