

OPEN FORUM INITIATIVE



HUMANS of CARDIOLOGY



Pennsylvania
CHAPTER

He was a senior doctor for many years, caring for patients up until last year when he decided to retire at the age of 83. He wanted to spend more time doing things he loved, like spending time gardening in his new house. On a cold October morning, he woke up and told his wife he was having a heart attack. He put a nitroglycerine tablet under his tongue and called the ambulance.

He was rushed to the cath lab but the disease was too extensive, the damage was already done. He had always told his family that he had lived a good life and didn't want any "heroic measures."

By the time I saw him, he couldn't talk much, but he recognized the tone of my voice. He opened his eyes and recognized my white coat, there was an expression of pride on his face. He was trying to smile but he couldn't. I could hear his lungs rapidly filling up with fluids. I glanced at the monitor, his heart was slowing down.

He took my hand in his right hand and tightly squeezed it and looked me right in the eyes. He knew this was bad and that the time had come. He knew I knew this was bad. He knew my first instinct as a doctor was wanting to help, but there wasn't much I could do besides hold his hand. It was a peaceful moment. A man who had cared for others and comforted them his whole life was trying to comfort me up until his last moments. As he became more bradycardic, I didn't rush to get atropine, I just squeezed his hand tighter. Moments later, he wasn't there anymore but there was a connection. He never retired, he "doctored" until his last moment. I was his last patient. He made me a better doctor.

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