

For Faizi

Feb 10, 2024

While I am sad that we are gathered together this afternoon, I, like all of you, love and adore the man whose life and work we are here to celebrate.

I feel so blessed to have met Faizi 13 years ago. He was the very first surgeon I worked with on my very first day in the OR. (And no, no one warned me...) BUT-- I'm proud to say I didn't fall for the sterile stapler joke on day one, though I did succumb to a few of his other tricks along the way. (He was notorious for scrubbing in and draping the patient using the stapler, and then trying to trick anyone who could be caught unaware to take the stapler from him, and he was often successful, especially with new staff and students!) At first, he was just a fun surgeon to work with and then more days than not, he was "*my* boss" as I circulated primarily in his OR on the days that I worked. I came to work each day with the primary intention of going above and beyond to make his job easier, and I know I'm only one of many here who felt that same draw to bring their all because of his influence.

On long days with a cranial vault on the schedule, I always had a Werther's hard candy (*they were one of his favorites!*) in my pocket that I learned to sneak into the corner of his mask for when he hit the 75% mark and needed just a little something to push through to the end.

He was a coworker but almost instantly from the start, he was also a mentor and friend. He was genuinely curious about my life as a person, beyond the small talk. We had deep conversations about religion, family, his love of cars and new technology, my career aspirations, and everything from interesting medical research to local restaurant recommendations. When I moved from circulating every day to being the OR educator, his "office" where he sat in between cases went from sitting on the empty stretcher parked outside OR 1, just through the open door to the chair right inside my office there where I kept a stash of Werther's candy just for him in my desk drawer. I loved when he would drop in and kick back and we could catch up on life. I will *forever* cherish his advice and how he challenged and expanded my perspectives in life.

When I think about Faizi, I think about how his influence changed the trajectory of my career. I honestly never intended to work in the OR for more than a year. I didn't expect to enjoy it. He had a way of making the OR a fun, comfortable environment with many opportunities to learn from his skills. He is *the complete opposite* of what everyone had warned me about surgeons in my nursing school days. He is kind, compassionate, funny, and curious, with a calm and humble temperament. While he was often quiet, he was witty. He has a magnetic personality. I gained so much respect for him and when I

thought about my initial plan to leave the OR after a year, I couldn't even imagine it. I wanted to continue coming to work every day to circulate in *his* operating room.

He invited Liz Lloyd and I to go to Guatemala for our first cleft mission in 2013 which further changed my life. I found so much satisfaction caring for those patients with him as he generously gave of his time and talents and his own money to change their lives. When we rounded in their hospital rooms in the hours and days after surgery, many of the mothers would address Faizi with tears in their eyes as "our angel doctor" when he entered the room. That is the first time I realized the magnitude of the man I was working with and how lucky I was to be associated with him and his work. It's a pretty special thing to be able to leave work and take vacation time to do *more work* and still thoroughly enjoy each long day and the people you get to serve with.

When I got the news of Faizi's passing, my husband hugged me and asked "what was the most important thing you learned from Faizi over the years?" And that question prompted a cascade of thoughts and memories over the last several weeks. The list is long, and still growing.

First, on a funny note, I thought back to the day many years ago when he told me "marriage works if the wife lets her husband make all of the decisions about technology and cars and she makes decisions about food and clothes and everything else." That makes sense. We all know Faizi loved his cars--and Saba is the #1 reason he was always so well dressed outside of his scrubs. I remembered his words when I finally gave in and (rather begrudgingly) let my husband convert me from android to iPhone after we got married last fall. **I was just following Faizi's advice.**

But on a more serious note, I asked a few of you what you learned from him, and many of the answers were the same, a testament to the steady man that Faizi is. I want to share a few of those.

He taught us that humor is *essential* at work. Jokes and pranks are Faizi's MO. He made the OR more comfortable and fun with his light-hearted personality. The way he loved and treated his patients and coworkers and his work made each of us want to work harder for him and do our best.

He always seemed genuinely fulfilled by the work he did. His path to being a master of pediatric craniofacial surgery is evidence that he was NOT in the business for financial gain, but rather to change lives and help children for the better. He was committed to his work. As I became a provider, I often looked to and tried to mirror his example of building long standing relationships with patients through compassionate care and concern.

Around Faizi, it was hard to forget the importance of family. Saba, Zydaan, and Zaman are his whole world. He lovingly and often shared stories and expressed his pride in Saba's skills and work and in the boys school and musical achievements. I remember many days in the OR where we had to put our gears in double time as a team to get Faizi home to spend time with his family because it was 'pizza and movie night' or something else fun he had planned. His family truly was his greatest accomplishment. (Many thanks to Saba and the boys for your sacrifices while Faizi worked and so that we could know and love him also.)

He was part of the team, no different than the rest of us. I remember a day when we were having trouble getting an arterial line on a young baby and I'm not sure what came over him, but Faizi decided to jump in to help and got the line on his first try. We all couldn't help but laugh in surprise—himself included!! He made plenty of jokes that day about how **he** could *easily* relieve the anesthesiologist if they needed a break and we let him bask in the glory. Really though, it was just all about teamwork to him.

But above all, the most important thing I learned from Faizi is the worth of people. In the OR, he was a friend to everyone. It didn't matter if you were a fellow surgeon, a med student intern, a brand new nurse, or the night shift janitor...he saw you as a friend and didn't look down on anyone. He smiled and waved or said hello. He wasn't above picking up his gown and gloves if he missed the trash and laundry basket at the close of a case. He genuinely expressed interest in the lives of those around him—schooling, job prospects, new babies, ailing grandparents. He was curious about it all. He allowed for vulnerability and instilled comfort in every conversation. He was never one to put himself on a pedestal though he silently commanded respect in the way he treated others equally, and he deserved it. He knit humor into every day and broke the ice for new employees and students to feel welcome in the OR with his many "rite of passage" jokes he would play—from the "left-handed mallet" to the "Otis elevator" and making up suture names like he worked for Mattel toys. We will never forget those days. For those are the days where we laughed till our cheeks hurt and coworkers became friends and we bonded all while doing life changing work. And those days with this man will forever be the days that changed each of us for the better. While his physical body may not walk on this earth any longer, his legacy can live on in each of us through these lessons learned, if we let it.

I firmly believe and agree with those mothers in Guatemala. Faizi was an angel doctor here on this earth, long before he was taken from us to walk among angels. He blessed the lives of so many with his talents, his humor and his kindness and I will continue to count my lucky stars for each and every day that I got to work with and learn from him as a colleague--*and*--that I still get to call him my friend.

Jennifer (Taylor) Moore
PCH OR Nurse 2011-2020