

19 y/o WM w/ a Mac #3

Mask, on. Gloves, on. I wedge myself between the door of the OR and a cart that holds tubes and wires and needles and tubes. That seems like where I should be.

A set of scrubs with evidence of a goatee behind his mask pushes a thick, white elixir through a snaking tube into The Patient.

(I only know The Patient as several numbers: a 56 year-old male, 211 pounds, owner of a heart currently beating 81...no, now 85 times per minute.)

If, perhaps, he was aware that I'd never before performed Laryngoscopy and Endotracheal Intubation—that he was lucky number one—that heart might show a bit more urgency.

It's almost my time. In this moment, there is no doubt in my mind why they call it the practice of medicine. My mask is all but completely fogged over.

The elixir does its work. It amazes me that three strangers dressed in pajamas perform the necessary life functions for this fathersonhusband with a heart that goes boop on the monitor eighty fou...two times each minute. Without them, he would die within two hundred boops.

I wonder what the hell I got myself into.

Ok out of the corner now GO spread the teeth gentlegentlegentle ok now slide it down the tongue sweep left watch the teeth ok what do you see careful of the teeth can you see the cords?

"It was a good try, but maybe this isn't the best one for you to do."

I hand over the equipment. I re-wedge myself into the corner, where I should be.

One of the pajamas easily passes an endotracheal tube through the glottic opening of the head of numbers and siblings and birthdays and I leave the room. Mask off, in the garbage. Gloves off, in the garbage.

Out of the corner, down the sterile blue hall where other mothersdaughtersbrothersuncles are wheeled to meet their pajama-clad strangers. I follow one of them. Take a deep breath.

Mask, back on. Gloves, back on.