

CHANGE OF SHIFT

Unexpected call

Llamada inesperada

Johnnys Arzuza-Bustamante

It had been a long morning, and the emergency department was more crowded than usual. It seemed like it was going to be an ordinary day, but this day was in fact going to be different. I was getting ready to see the next patient when suddenly my phone rang. Felipe, one of my best friends. To tell you the truth, I didn't know whether to answer. I had many patients awaiting, but it was unusual for him to call me, especially during weekdays.

So, I picked up the phone:

- How are you, "blackie"? - That's what my friends always call me affectionately. He didn't even let me answer the question....

- My friend, my cousin convulsed an hour ago, while he was waiting for the bus, and he's not well, he's still unconscious. It's the first time this has happened to him! I'm going to the Tunal hospital with him.

-Felipe, how old is he?

-Eighteen, and no history.

Tunal is where my wife works. So, I call her and tell her everything I know.

She tells me that the patient is in the resuscitation area, in convulsive status and that he has been prescribed benzodiazepines, with some improvement.

I remain calm, I know he is in good hands. I continue with my consultation. This time I must attend a patient in the emergency room with a history of lupus, and a hospital admission 6 months ago for an alveolar haemorrhage that even required intubation.

- What's wrong?

- Well, I was seen here 2 days ago and I'm still feeling the same! Two days ago I consulted for chest pain and dyspnea.

I review the case and see that everything had been done well. I focus on the patient, with the difficulty that she is not very happy with my explanations. I give her the best care I can, but I keep thinking about my friend and his cousin.

Worried about my friend, I call my wife again:

-How is he doing?

-He's not doing well, he had a CAT scan, which turned out normal, but he had another seizure and we had to put him on mechanical ventilation. The family is nervous and doesn't know how to communicate.

I call my friend:

-Felipe, was your cousin taking anything strange, drugs?

-He is a very healthy young man; he was depressed by the death of his mother two months ago.

but we have searched his room and the house and there is nothing to give us any clues. The poor guy lives with his aunt and grandmother, his father lives in the US and his mother passed away 2 months ago. But he is an emotionally strong person and I know that the cause of the seizure is not intoxication.

Beep, beep (WhatsApp sound): it's my wife. Johnny, we've repeated the CT scan because he's started having decorticate movements.

I hang up and call:

-Felipe, a thrombectomy is necessary. The CT scan shows a hyperdense basilar artery, and an angiogram has been performed that confirms thrombosis. The prognosis is very bad.

-My friend, I have hope, I think everything is going to be all right.

The next morning was one of the grayest. I woke up with a disheartening message.

-He's gone, he's brain dead, there's nothing to be done.

I felt helpless, I couldn't come by my friend's side to support him, but it was not my intention, I was on call and couldn't leave the hospital.

One last call to my friend that morning:

-Felipe, I understand your pain and that of your family: have you thought about the option of donation? It can do a lot and save lives.

Author Affiliations: Emergency Medicine Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá, Colombia.

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Corresponding Author: Johnnys Arzuza-Bustamante. Emergency Medicine Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá, Colombia.

Email: Arzuza_j@javeriana.edu.co

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