

A letter of gratitude from a medical student-turned-patient

Two weeks ago, while I was helping with an emergency medicine course that I'm a teaching assistant for, I started feeling extremely light-headed, and the chest tightness that I had dismissed as heartburn earlier that morning got worse. I was tended to by the emergency medicine doctor who I was teaching with, admitted to the ED with a resting pulse rate of 130 beats per minute, later admitted to the cardiology unit at the hospital after some tests came back abnormal, then discharged with a two-week heart monitor and no diagnosis.

As a medical student, being a patient – especially one whose case was “truly a mystery” (my cardiologist's words) – was frustrating, overwhelming, and scary. I had never felt more vulnerable in my entire life. Being able to experience the health care system from “the other side of the bed rail” was incredibly eye-opening, but I'll save my sentiments on that for another blog post.

For now, with Thanksgiving quickly approaching, I'd like to use this platform to thank the strong support system that showed up for me while I was a patient, and encourage readers to take some time to thank their support systems too.

To the emergency medicine physician who used the EKG machine we were teaching students with in class to make sure I was okay and calmed me down as he walked me to the emergency room and made sure I was well taken care of..

To the emergency room doctors, nurses, techs, and staff who called me “one of our own” when they saw my med student badge and made sure they taught me at the same time they cared for

me...

To the cardiology unit team at the hospital who, once they overcame their surprise that someone was being admitted while wearing blue hospital scrubs, took incredible care of me and made me feel as comfortable as I could in a bed that moved every five minutes (to make sure patients don't get pressure ulcers)...

To my cardiology nurse who assured me that everything happens for a reason, and who has greeted me with the warmest hug and concern every time I've since shown up on the unit as a med student...

To my hospital "roommate" who had a far worse condition and prognosis than I did, who taught me "the ropes" of being a hospital patient, told me stories about her experiences in and out of hospitals for the last five years to calm me down and distract me from why *I* was sitting in my hospital bed, and inspired me with her resilience, optimism, and humor...

To my friends who checked in on me, walked in with their white coats, scrubs, and hospital badges after visiting hours to sneak me milk and cookies, bring me things from my apartment and a spare charger when my phone died, and laugh with me, who just sat with me to make sure I didn't feel alone for a single second because even though I was trying to be brave, I'm sure they knew I was scared...

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

I – we – all have so much to be grateful for. I hope your Novembers are filled with blessings, good people, and lots of gratitude.

Stanford Medicine Unplugged is a forum for students to chronicle their experiences in medical school. The student-penned entries appear on Scope once a week during the academic year; the entire blog series can be found in the Stanford

Medicine Unplugged [category](#).

Natasha Abadilla is currently a third-year medical student doing research in health disparities and pediatric surgery outcomes. More of her views on medical student life and social issues can be found on Twitter: [@natashhaabadilla](#).

Photo by [Nicole Honeywell](#)