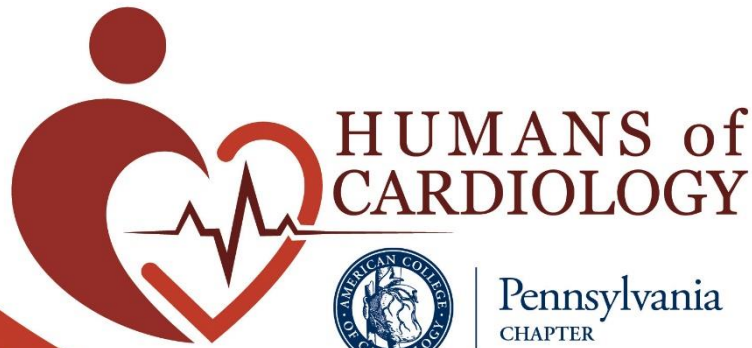


OPEN FORUM INITIATIVE



It was 5:50am when the beeper went off. Knowing that I was not on-call, I was in no hurry to get to work that morning. At 6:15am I got the panicked phone call from the cath lab manager - "Are you on your way?" I explained that I was not on call, but I could come in if needed. "It's Denise! The STEMI patient is Denise!", she said. These words sent chills up my spine as I envisioned my beloved co-worker as the one needing our care. As I arrived in the cath lab twenty minutes later, I learned the full story.

The STEMI alert that was called at 5:50am was for a 90-year old woman in the ED. My friend Denise was one of the nurses on call that morning. As she rushed into work along with the rest of the cath lab staff, it seemed that it would be just like any other STEMI. That is, until Denise walked into the control room. As she stepped into the room she reached out to her co-workers and abruptly fell to the floor in cardiac arrest. Thankfully the other nurse and cardiologist were there, and quickly jumped into action. They defibrillated my dear friend, and within minutes had her on the cath lab table ready for intervention. The teamwork that was witnessed that day was beyond what words can describe, and I am so glad to say that Denise is still working with us in the cath lab today!

As anyone in healthcare will tell you, taking care of your work family can be one of the most difficult things you may experience in your professional life, but it can also be the most rewarding. The truly amazing thing about this story is that we work in a small community hospital that did not always have the capability to perform cardiac catheterizations, let alone coronary interventions. Thankfully, years ago we were fortunate enough to participate in the CPORT trial, which revealed that successful PCI was possible at small community hospitals that do not have on-site cardiac surgery. Not only have we been able to save countless lives over the years, we were able to save one of our own. Denise is not just a cath lab nurse; she is the nurse in our cath lab that has been there since the beginning. She was there when the cath lab opened and she was there for the implementation of the CPORT trial. She is our mentor, co-worker, and friend that taught us everything we needed to know. I have worked with her for over 22 years, and I am so grateful that we are still working together today due to our interventional cardiology program.

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