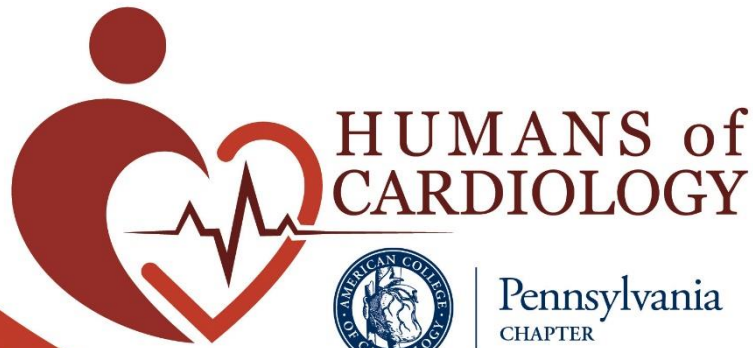


OPEN FORUM INITIATIVE



My son was born in September, at the very hospital where I work. My husband had gone home to care for our three-year-old, and the room was quiet. Stepping out for some juice, I watched other new mothers laugh and visit with their families and felt a pang. I wanted a balloon; I felt lonely.

But medical training had taken me across the country from my family and, while I probably knew more people in that hospital than any other new mom on the unit, I wasn't expecting anyone. I lay on my bed and closed my eyes, trying to appreciate the ephemeral peace.

Walking the busy halls of a large academic institution, my days are so chaotic that I rarely have space to reflect and appreciate what brought me to medicine in the first place: human connection. So when I opened my eyes to see a colleague smiling down at me, I was taken aback.

He sat down at my bedside, marveled at my son, and shared memories from when his own children were young. I found myself indescribably moved. That afternoon my colleague became my family member and friend. White coats out of sight, we shared a moment as human beings. Every day I am surrounded by people but often feel alone, confined to my white coat. And yet that memory continually inspires me to thoughtfully connect with those around me, even on the most challenging days.

Jenna Kay, MD, is a third year cardiology fellow at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. She will start her heart failure fellowship in July.
