

Tip of the Month

Bother My Nurse!

Good morning! I might look like I'm sleeping to you, but the fact is I'm sedated. That's because I just came out of surgery. You must be here to draw my blood. I knew it was you because by now I know the sound of a phlebotomy tray bumping around. But don't let that stop you from doing what you have to do. I'm sure my doctor needs the test results ASAP, so just go ahead; I won't mind. In fact, I can hear you just fine; I just can't respond. I must be just one level below consciousness.

Pardon me? I heard you speak someone's name, but it wasn't mine. I wish you'd say it again. Now I'm worried. Who do you think I am? I hope you plan on checking my bracelet. Wait a minute... it's gone. I don't feel my identification bracelet around my wrist anymore. They must have cut it off during surgery or something. I know I'm not in the same room as I was before surgery because the sounds are all different. You don't think I'm someone else, do you? If you do, too bad for the other fella because his doc's gonna treat him according to my test results and I'm not the healthiest horse in the barn right now. Please, oh please, make sure you know who I really am.

What am I thinking? This is a hospital. You folks know better. I'm sure this kinda thing is one of those situations that has built-in safe guards to protect me against being misidentified. I'm sure there's some kinda protocol or something for protecting me against such things. You hospital folks deal with life and death every day... you know how dangerous an identification mistake can be, so I've got nothing to worry about. Sure wish I could wake up and talk to you, though, just to be sure. Oh, well...my life is in your hands, just like it was on the operating table. All I can do is hope you know for sure who I am... an who I'm not.

There! You just said it again! That's not my name. You do think I'm someone else! Aren't there rules about drawing blood from patients without an identification bracelet? There's gotta be. I bet you're supposed to ask my nurse to be sure, aren't you. That's it. Nobody gets their blood drawn without being identified in two ways. Isn't that one of the rules with you medical folks? Identify every patient two ways? I think so. That means you can't draw me without having someone put a bracelet on me and then you have to have them confirm that the bracelet is right, because I'm too doped up right now to confirm it myself. Please don't assume I'm the guy your papers say is supposed to be in this bed. Go ahead, bother my nurse like you're supposed to. I don't care what she's doing, bother her. And don't just ask her if I'm the guy in 205-A; drag her over here and make her look at me. Then put a bracelet on me so whoever comes next doesn't have a chance to assume me right out of existence. My life depends on it; so does the life of the guy you think I am, so do it.

Are you still there? I don't hear you anymore. You must be bothering my nurse. Yes! I knew you would. You didn't seem like one of those corner-cutters to me. I can hear you out at the nursing station. You're asking for an arm bracelet to be put on me. Your voice is pleasant but you're determined to follow policy. You've done this before, I can tell. Sounds like the nurse is just as determined because I can hear you both entering the room. She's a good nurse; just a little overworked. I can feel her putting on my identification bracelet and it's such a relief. Nobody can misidentify me now unless they really work at it. But if everyone else here is as good as you and my nurse, it's just not possible.

I can't tell you how much it means to me that you do everything right by the book. I wish I could thank you, but it'll be a few hours before I'm awake. By then, I won't remember. So I'm thanking you now... silently. I'm also thanking you for my wife, my kids and the fella who you thought was in this bed.