

# Extending a Helping Hand

By

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Just two weeks ago, my preceptor had elaborated on two important points. He stressed that it was important to be a physician who never gives up on his or her patients, no matter how terminally ill they may be. He also touched briefly on different methods of resuscitation procedures that could be conducted in emergency conditions. As I walked away from the clinic that evening, never in my wildest dreams did I ever think that I would soon be put to test on what I had learnt.

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A week later, as I was on my way back home while driving along the North-South Expressway, I saw several victims of a hit-and-run lying on the road. Cars whisked passed, no one bothered to stop and help. My conscience would not let me drive on so I stopped my car. I

pulled the teenage boy who was on the middle lane to the curb. There was another who was bleeding profusely from an injury he had sustained on his head. His right eyeball was protruding slightly as well. There were fresh blood clots around this teenage boy. He was cold and pale and did not respond to any stimulus. I did not notice any spontaneous movements either. I came to the conclusion that he was dead! The other teenage boy whom I had pulled to the curb wasn't moving either. I could not feel his pulse, but he felt warm. Parts of their motorcycle and the contents of their bags were strewn across the highway. Cars and buses drove pass, some even slowed down to take pictures before driving off.

Finally, two cars stopped. We were all trying to get the appropriate authorities on the line but network coverage was quite poor as we were surrounded by hills. The boy whom I had moved to the curb suddenly moved his fingers. I felt a gush of hope. I recalled what had been taught in classes or clinical posting, and applied the knowledge accordingly. There was this elderly gentleman beside me who advised me to stop as he felt there was no hope fearing that the boy was already dead. However, I continued my attempts to resuscitate him and he responded! He opened his eyes and just stared. I realised that he was stunned. I

helped him into a sitting position, leaned him against the road divider and felt his pulse. I checked his pupils which showed consensual response to the light stimulus, something that was not observed earlier. While waiting for the ambulance he lost consciousness a few times. Eventually he regained full consciousness and was able to respond to my questions.

He cried as he narrated the accident. It was a hit-and-run. He was the riding the bike while his friend, who did not strap on his helmet securely, was the pillion rider. He then became silent but gave me a small smile, probably thankful that he was alive. The ambulance finally arrived and I knew he was going to be alright. They thanked me for helping out and asked which hospital I was attached to so that they could refer this particular victim to me at the Emergency Department. From their amazed facial expressions, I could tell they found it interesting that a first year medical student was able to conduct emergency medicine procedures at the site of the accident. They were glad to see at least one victim survived. Their appreciation touched me deeply. As I see it, there is still hope for humanity; the fact that we stopped and helped.

As I walked away from the site of the accident, looking at the blood stains on my palms, I felt thankful for the knowledge I had obtained from my training at the university. It felt good being able to help someone 'regain life'. Why stop and help? I did it out of compassion even though my knowledge was minimal. Of course it is important to know what to do as well or one might cause further damage. These two boys are sons to parents who would have been waiting for their return that night. As humans they should be respected and not just left for dead at the roadside. I related this incident to my preceptor. Our discussion this time also included a moral, ethical and professional perspective. I owe my heartiest thanks to my preceptor and my university lecturers for the knowledge shared, the encouragement on my interest and for further strengthening my passion in medicine. However, I felt really sad and was deeply disturbed for not being able to assist the boy who bled to death before I arrived at the accident site. I saw hope in the other boy's eyes and I just could not let him die, remembering my high school motto "Aut viam inveniam aut faciam" - Where there is a will, there is always a way.