

Keeping the Right Focus

A story appearing on the Heroic Stories website is a reminder of what really matters in health care.

Annginette Anderson Moos, a hospital staff member, recalled learning an important lesson about balancing professionalism with compassion for the customer's worries and fears – and learning it from a groggy patient.

As a graduate student thinking of a career in health care, she visited an operating room in action. The operation was a biopsy, during which a tiny sample of tissue was to be removed from a woman, sent to a laboratory, and checked for signs of cancer.

If cancer was found, the operation would resume to remove the affected tissue area. If there was no sign of malignancy, the operation would end.

Moos was fascinated by the precision and teamwork of the surgeons and nurses. They worked together smoothly to obtain the sample tissue and rush it to the lab. All the while, the patient lay unconscious.

When the report came back from the lab, there was good news: no sign of cancer. The team closed the incision and wrapped up the operation.

A team member awakened the patient, told her she would be going back to her room, and went on to his next tasks – inadvertently turning his back on her, as did the rest of the busy team.

The patient looked around groggily and asked no one in particular, “Does this mean I don't have cancer?”

Her simple question changed everything. The team all gathered around the patient and reassured her that no, she didn't have cancer, and yes, she was okay and would be going home soon.

She had reminded the team of the true purpose of their expertise: to serve the patient.

In the hectic pace of our work in Life Care and Century Park, it's easy even for dedicated people to forget this fact.

Remember that it is your job as a leader to keep customer service front and center.

– Beecher Hunter