

Surgeon Gives Boy His Blood

Dr. Samuel Weinstein does what many health professionals do that goes above and beyond their duties.



He makes trips into parts of the world that are very poor and where specialized medical care is often unavailable. That says something about his character and his humanity.

Dramatic evidence of that came when the heart surgeon from New York was performing an operation in San Salvador in May 2006.

At that time, Weinstein was chief of pediatric cardio-thoracic surgery at Montefiore Medical Center in New York. (In July 2015, Weinstein joined SpecialtyCare, based in Nashville, Tennessee, as executive vice president and chief medical officer).

On that day in San Salvador, Weinstein had an 8-year-old patient on the surgical table. The team was already 12 hours into a complex procedure to repair his defective heart.

The surgery had been going well, but the little boy was bleeding more than the doctors would have liked. Because the hospital did not have all the medicines Weinstein could have requested at his customary medical center, he inquired about more blood for him. At that point, he was told that no more was available because of his rare blood type. The blood bank was depleted.

Weinstein was advised that his patient had B-negative blood – a type shared by only about 2 percent of the population. The surgeon informed his colleagues that his blood type was also B-negative. And he interrupted surgery for about 20 minutes to donate a pint of his own blood.

After a couple of bottles of water and a Pop-Tart, the 43-year-old surgeon went back and finished the operation. In a manner typical of him, Weinstein declared there was no one on the surgical team who wouldn't have done the same thing.

The young patient, Francisco Calderon Anthony Fernandez of San Salvador, came off his ventilator the very next day and had some lunch with Dr. Weinstein. He continued to recover nicely and went home to be with his family.

“His mother was very happy with me,” reported Weinstein in an interview after his mercy trip with Heart Care International, “and she said to me, ‘Does this mean that he’s going to grow up and become an American doctor?’”

The account of the doctor who saved a boy's life with a gift not only of his skills but of his own blood as well will surely be told to the child repeatedly. One can only hope that the retelling of so wonderful a story will have a positive impact on him. He may not become a doctor, but he can be an unselfish human being.

(more)

Weinstein's story is not unlike the commitment made daily by associates in Life Care and Century Park. Although they may not be performing a heart operation on a patient, they nevertheless invest themselves through their professional skills and, yes, perhaps in some cases by giving their blood to those they serve who may be in dire need.

These are associates who are there at critical moments, and they respond with love and kindness. Ours is a noble calling, indeed.

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter