



# Friday Night [under the] Lights...

2018



*Happy Friday...*

I hope everyone had a nice week. Things warmed up a bit the past few days, but there were still some AMR Practices around the country facing some bitter weather...

As a matter of fact, here in Texas, the temperature today was in the 50's. We almost had to close schools *again*. Rough.

And just as our Lawmakers (that term seems to get scarier every day) fiercely work to reach agreement to avoid a government shutdown at midnight, I work furiously to have a FNuL in your inbox by midnight (by law, the time zone of that midnight is at the author's discretion...).

So, quick follow up to last week's Flu discussion. The CDC has officially declared the 2018 Flu an epidemic – a designation that's based on the number of cases and deaths. There is still question about whether we have reached the peak or the outbreak is still climbing. Interestingly, we really never know until the end of the season.

In the last week, 6.3 % of all U.S. physician visits were for the Flu (that officially surpasses all recent outbreaks). There have been 30 pediatric deaths and the Flu accounted for 8.2% of all deaths last week (*btw, Mike Ragone – There were ZERO deaths directly related to the Flu shot itself*) ...

But here's a really odd twist to this year's Flu. Not only is it the worst outbreak we've experienced in a decade, but, if the Government doesn't reach an agreement that will prevent "shutting down" as of midnight tonight, the CDC has announced that most of their Flu surveillance and support programs would be suspended. That means we won't know much more about activity / mortality / updates than what we know right now.

*So – if you're still holding out and not getting your Flu shot, when you get sick, you won't even count if the government's closed... So, you might as well get it.*

- **Lessons in life when you least expect them...**

I want to tell you three stories tonight that impacted me in a way that I didn't really expect. Two of them happened to me this week and one was several months ago.

Interestingly, all three stories are really about small stuff. Nothing earth shattering. Not anything that would ever make the evening news. Probably not something we'd even necessarily talk about after it happened.

As a matter of fact, all three are everyday life stories. These things happened to me as part of "just another day". The events that started each story led to something that was much bigger.

So... for whatever reason, when I think about them *all together*, it's one of those powerful reminders about how we choose to live our life, how we choose to interact with other human beings and whether we want to leave our mark in a very specific way.

And in the World, we work in – that we CHOOSE to work in, events like these are even more impactful. They reminded me of just how important the little things are...

Now, before you panic, I'm not one of those people that thinks there's meaning in every single thing that happens – If shooting stars were good luck, I'd be watching them from some magnificent chalet high on the mountain. If fortune cookies truly worked, I'd be writing to you from some hammock on my own island surrounded by the crystal blue water...

*So, here we go...*

Last weekend, I made my weekly trip to Costco to get "stuff". You know 2 tons of cold cuts, toilet paper for you, your family and the neighborhood, a really cool cigar turning device with remote sensors that's submersible to 500 feet, a small car, case of wine, sheets and pillows in case I got another bed – You get it. It was Costco.

And maybe I've even gotten Flu shots there. Just *maybe*.

(have I told you how much I love Costco?) ...

So, last weekend as I was walking into the store from parking, there was a woman walking in front of me, slowly, with her head wrapped tightly and neatly in a scarf. There was no hair coming out from the lower part of the scarf.



It was one of those scarfs that was there for a reason. As I walked behind her, I did what all of us do – I wondered what kind of cancer she had, thought about what that chemo must be like and thought for a minute about how tough that must be for people. For only a few seconds, I thought about all those patients we see who are mid treatment who wear their scarves or choose just not to get out in public at all. Maybe they're too tired, maybe they're self-conscious about how they look, maybe they don't have the strength or energy or perhaps they just didn't want to be around other people.

And for just a few seconds, as I bet you do as well, I think – Wow – how hard would that be...

I'm thankful that it's not me.

And then I passed by her on her right side.

I cordially glanced at her and and smiled, and she eeked out a small smile in return. She had obviously put make-up on for her journey.

And then, for whatever reason, I stopped for a split second, looked at her and said, "I promise I'm not a perv or a weirdo (no comment), but you look really pretty". I think I just wanted to say something nice based on my 20 seconds of thinking how tough it probably was for her to come out that day.

What happened next really took me by surprise.

She reached out and grabbed my arm, looked at me and said in this wobbly voice "you have no idea how much that means to me".

I have to tell you – It took everything I had in that Costco parking lot to not break down a bit. It was this huge, unexpected emotional storm. I said something like "enjoy your Costco adventure" and we parted ways.

For the rest of that day, I thought about that lady and her scarf. She made ME feel better about where I was and what I did. That certainly was unexpected.

It only took two seconds, but from the look on her face, scarf, make-up and all, when she grabbed my arm, and said what she did, it made us both feel just a bit better about where we were and life in general. Thinking about it, I can only imagine how long she prepped, looked at herself in the mirror, debated even going out at all and finally made the decision to head out the door. For her, it was a major ordeal. I know how nice it feels when someone says, "hey that shirt looks good on you" or "your hair looks great (come to think of it, that hasn't happened in a while....)". Now I realize how that same emotion can help when you might need a boost or reassurance.

We're supposed to do that in medicine.

It makes sense that we do it in life.

(I bought myself a big jar of the Blue Cheese stuffed olives as a treat).

*Life Lesson #2.*

Two days ago.

It got pretty nippy in Austin and I had to run to Home Depot (side note, they have always been a close #2 favorite to Costco). I had to pick up some outdoor faucet insulators.

As I was looking, an elderly Asian woman was picking up several packages of window insulation foam. She was obviously struggling to figure out exactly which one would work right.



Finally, she turned to me and, in very broken English, asked something about wind in her house and doors...

I couldn't quite understand her because of the language barrier and the fact that she was really soft-spoken.

What I thought she said was "is this for the wind in my door"? I wasn't sure and spent a minute doing all the things that never work (talked louder, made hand gestures, etc). Finally, I decided to just walk her over to the doors and windows.

It worked.

She had all the wrong stuff and we went back over to the insulation stuff and got the right weather-stripping for a door.

As I was about to leave, she looked at me, looked at the 4 long weather-strip things in her cart and said ... "how"?

Good luck with that, Ed.

We went back over to the doors and we walked through where to put it and how to fit it in at the corners (I'd be lying if I said I didn't feel a bit like Tim the Tool Guy). Where was the Home Depot guy, anyway?



Anyway, when we were done, she said thanks, I grabbed my 4 Styrofoam faucet insulators (let me know if I can help you install those...) and I headed up to the packed registers (you could have charged \$100.00 an ounce for salt that night).

And then...

As I was standing in line, I saw the lady 5 or 6 lanes over. I glanced, she said something to the lady she was with and pointed at me.

Great. She probably got the wrong stuff and was blaming it on "that guy".

So the lady she was with walks over to me.

Great. She's going to tell me how I screwed up and wasted their time. My HD career was vanishing before my eyes...

And then she said, "sir – Thank you so much for helping my mom find the right insulation. My dad lives at home with her and usually does this but he's sick. She was worried about getting the wrong thing and worried about bothering you. I'm sorry she took your time".

Took my time? How nice was that for her to go out of her way to walk over to me and tell me that.

What seemed simple, quick, routine and a non-big issue, was apparently something her mom was struggling with.

After what happened at Costco, it once again made me realize that the seemingly small things we do in life to help out others, whoever they are, whatever is going on in their world, can have a much bigger impact than we would ever know.

Honestly, what initially felt like it was going to be a pain in the butt for some stranger who didn't even know what weather-stripping to get, was an extremely powerful reminder of how good it feels to be nice.

We never truly know what's going on in other people's lives. But if we try and make our little encounter just a bit better, a bit nicer – It could mean the world to them.

It sounds cliché, but it really, really, really makes a difference.

And with what we do – The profession you CHOSE, just think of how many of those little things you could do in a single day and make people feel a bit less yuck.

I promise – It will probably have more of an impact on you than them....

So finally.

The last story (I need to end with one that doesn't make you think all I do is hit on women in stores and parking lots...).

Several months ago, I was behind a grumpy guy checking into the hotel in Cleveland. It was late, the weather was, well, Cleveland, and he had obviously been traveling all day.

In his very impersonal and almost angry way, he asked why he didn't get upgraded. He had been traveling all day and was expecting "I would probably have a decent chance of getting upgraded at a property like this". When the Front Desk Clerk looked, she said she may have an upgrade but would have to check.

He sighed deeply and said something like – "you should already know whether you have upgrades or not – it isn't Rocket Science". He was growing more impatient, looked back at me and mumbled – "this is pathetic" ...



After what seemed like forever, and a constant stream of sighs and rolling eyes, the Desk Clerk very kindly apologized and gave him his keys. He stormed off to the elevator mumbling swear words all the way.

As I stepped up to the desk, I said "nice job with Mr. Personality. Glad it was you and not me – I would have put him in a closet".

I told her she was much more patient than I would have ever been. What a grumpy, angry dude...

So I gave her my name, she looked at my license, thanked me for choosing Marriott, looked up at me and said – “looks like I can get you an upgrade”.

We both laughed and high-fived. Being nice makes a huge difference in life. Everywhere we go...

...and by the way, I mentioned her by name in the customer service follow up survey.

See why all three of these stories make a more powerful statement.

We work (by choice and with privilege) with people who are often having a really rough time. If we can make even a little bit of a positive difference, let's do it.

I will make it a point to comment to wander outside my comfort zone and try and look for something that might make that little bit of a difference. I really should do it more often.

We all should.

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### ▪ AMR Life...

Tonight I want to share part of a forwarded email I got from Scott Lenn regarding two of our colleagues in Pueblo. I couldn't possibly have found a better example of exactly what kindness looks like when it's really, really hard.

I don't know Kala personally, but I can tell you that I sure am glad we work in the same family.

What she did will change the memory of that awful day to maybe make it just a little less painful. *What a Class Act.*

At 1831 hours [REDACTED] AMR Medic 6, Paramedic Kala Granato and EMT Sean Surniak responded with Pueblo Fire Department Engine 2 and Squad 1 to a Cor-0 at [REDACTED]. The patient was a very elderly gentleman. Medic 6 was on scene ahead of Fire units and was already removing the patient from the automobile he was in. Engine 2, Squad 1 and Medic 6 then moved the patient on AMR's cot into the ambulance to work him. Paramedic Granato ran the Cor perfectly. Unfortunately, it was not successful and the patient was pronounced dead.

Medic 6 remained on scene awaiting the Coroner. The man's daughter and elderly wife were on scene waiting in their car. The wife requested to see her husband. Ms. Granato acceded to her request. She straightened up the rig, prepared the patient as much as possible then allowed the wife to enter and sit with her husband. I observed through the back window as Kala sat with the man's wife for some time, listening with obvious genuine sympathy as the woman no doubt talked about her husband and their life together.

Paramedic Granato's act of kindness and empathy on that scene went far and above the simple call of duty deserves our most sincere praise and admiration.

Sincerely yours,

Engine 2, Pueblo Fire Department  
Capt. Dennis Chappell  
Emergency Medical Officer Adam Haman  
Engineer Mark Pickerel

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- **What the...?**

Tonight's WTH is a picture I took this past fall when I drove my son back to College.

I'm not sure I even want to know. Just write the number down in case you need it.



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- **Epilogue...**

Three elderly ladies were discussing the trials of getting older.

One said, "Sometimes I catch myself with a jar of mayonnaise in my hand in front of the refrigerator and can't remember whether I need to put it away, or start making a sandwich."

The second lady chimed in, "Yes, sometimes I find myself on the landing of the stairs and can't remember whether I was on my way up or on my way down. "

The third one responded, "Well, I'm glad I don't have that problem; knock on wood," she raps her knuckles on the table, then says, "That must be the door, I'll get it."



So, that's it from my world. *Happy Friday.*

The Government is now officially shut down. It could perhaps be the most productive few days we'll have for a while... Enjoy them.

I hope the Internet still works and this makes it your way...

As always, thanks for what you do and how you do it. Make a few little differences. You'll love it. I promise...

*Ed*

**Ed Racht, MD**  
Chief Medical Officer  
American Medical Response  
[edward.racht@amr.net](mailto:edward.racht@amr.net)