

Operating theatre

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Dr Brighton Chireka

I thought I should share with you my first week in operating theatre as a medical student . This was in 1995 when I was a 3rd year medical student at the University of Zimbabwe. I had to do a rotation in general surgery and this involved going to theatre and observing surgeons operating on patients.

Those days we used to have theatre matrons who were the bosses in theatre . They used to call the shots so everyone had to toe the line otherwise entry into the theatre would be denied.

When it was my turn to go to theatre I was given a quick induction on infection control and how to scrub in theatre (washing hands and wearing of theatre gowns). I was quick to learn and was soon ready to observe and even assist the surgeons in theatre.

On one occasion I was in the operating theatre and the surgeons wanted an extra pair of hands. They asked me to scrub and assist them . I was excited as at last I was becoming a "real doctor " who can operate on people.

After washing my hands and putting on the theatre gown under the supervision of the theatre matron I went to the operating table to assist the surgeon. The team was very nice and gave a running commentary as they carried out the operation. I was fascinated with what I was seeing the surgeon doing . As I was concentrating on what I was seeing , I accidentally dropped an instrument

on the floor .

I heard the nurse who was assisting the surgeon shouting on top of her voice " instrument on the floor!" . I then saw the theatre matron coming to the operating table . I knew that I was going to be told off so without thinking I just bend down and picked the instrument on the floor.

There was chaos in theatre as everyone was shocked about what I had just done . I was immediately send away to wash again and put on new theatres gowns. I later on realised my mistake that when you are scrubbed you are sterile you must not touch anything that will make you dirty. Me picking up the instrument on the floor meant that I made myself dirty and could not assist in the operation until I had scrubbed again.

It was the talk of the week in that theatre and I was laughed at by the theatre staff. I felt embarrassed but this was the norm during my training that medical students were humiliated in front of patients and nurses. We would work hard and spend hours in the library to avoid being found clueless during ward rounds.

Looking back I can see that I have come a long way and can laugh about it but then it was a humiliating experience.

Do you have any humiliating or fun experience to share with us here about your profession ? Please feel free to share !

This article was compiled by **Dr. Brighton Chireka** who is a GP and a Patient Engagement Advocate (PEA) in Folkestone Kent, UK. You can contact him on **info@docbeecee.co.uk**