

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dr. Wolff is a board-certified family physician in private practice in Cornelius, North Carolina. He finished his family practice residency in 1997. He has graciously consented to share stories from the trenches of primary care. While his practice diary is taken from actual patient encounters, the reader should be aware that some medication references may represent off-label uses. Identifying details have been changed to protect patient confidentiality.

We at the *Companion* are certain that these vignettes will inform, entertain, challenge, and stimulate our readers in their effort to address behavioral issues in the everyday practice of medicine.

“There’s No Crying in Football!”

Christian G. Wolff, M.D.

Monday

Today’s entry began at about 12:30 a.m. I had just finished watching a dispiriting collapse of our local professional football team in the showcase game of the week. Talk about a downer. As my colleague and I descended the exit ramp, a white rectangle on the ground caught my eye. An empty blister pack of escitalopram lay there, apparently recently used. Now I know its manufacturer touts a rapid onset of action. . . .

Tuesday

A very angry patient sat across from me this morning. This woman had been taking her antidepressant for several years and was indignant that I actually wanted to see her and speak to her once every 6 months in order to keep her prescription going. As I sat listening to her tirade, I began to wonder if I needed to titrate her dose; so, I suggested that. Stunned, she sat mercifully silent for what seemed like a minute but probably was about 10 seconds, after which, she began to cry. She revealed to me that she was going through a divorce. I adjusted her dose and referred her to counseling at her church. She still didn’t apologize, though. Maybe she will at her next visit—in 1 month.

Wednesday

GT and his mom were here for consultation about school difficulties. I was a little surprised, because I know GT as a thoughtful, erudite 12-year-old fellow. GT sat there quietly and clearly uncomfortably while his mom explained that, for the first time, GT brought home B’s on his report card, and she was convinced that he might do better with the magic of pharmaceuticals. Nearly apoplectic, I asked GT to excuse his mother and me to my office. His mother was serious. Luckily, I have a great psychologist to whom I can refer families like this, but I’m not sure how much this woman can be swayed. I’m very worried for GT.

Thursday

AW is an anxious 25-year-old woman who was recently married. She was here today for follow-up after an emergency room visit for a syncope episode. At first blush, I wondered if she was beginning to decompensate on her current medical regimen. Then I learned, as Paul Harvey would say, “The rest of the story.” Eight hours before hosting a dinner party, her husband noted an abnormality on the floor of the powder room. Thirty minutes later, he had pulled up half the floor tiles to reveal a mold issue. AW walked over to investigate the racket emanating from said powder room and proceeded to hyperventilate and faint. Her husband, undaunted, enlisted their neighbor to transport AW to the emergency room while he trucked off to the home center. Before AW returned to the house, her husband had remedied the floor with new tile and grout, and the dinner party continued as planned.

Wow. What a study of personalities.

Friday

As I applied sutures to the leg of a 7-year-old boy, I carried on casual conversation with his mother, whose hand was being firmly clenched at the time. She jokingly asked me if I didn't care about her health. I peered up at her questioningly, and she went on to say how her neighbors to the left and to the right were raving about how I was able to help them quit smoking with the aid of a miracle drug. I guess this was her way of letting me know that peer pressure had allowed her to progress from the precontemplative state. Gladly, I supplied her with her own prescription. I'm happy to see peer pressure exerted for good for a change. ♦