

House Calls

Tribute to my Dad

By Rikki Schuster, PA-C

I'm not sure how your summer went, but mine was one I will never forget. I was prepared to have a successful summer treating the visitors' swimmer's ear, like I do every summer, when my family was blindsided with the news that my father had pancreatic cancer. I had never been on this side of the fence before. With my years of practicing Emergency Medicine, I had plenty of experience delivering bad news to patient's families, but until now I never had to hear those words that turn your life around, 'there are many tumors, in multiple organs'. So our journey began.

I never in my life witnessed such bravery and strength. My dad never complained, during all of the procedures, operations, poking and prodding. He showed such a will to live when the doctors told him he didn't have a chance, he shocked most of them when he informed them he wanted to keep trying. Everyone says things happen for a reason, and I spent most of the time by my dad's bedside trying to figure out the reasons. I'm still not sure what they are, except that he certainly taught the people around him not to give up even when obstacle after obstacle is thrown in front of you. With our family never leaving his side for three months, my dad continued to teach each of his adult children courage, grace, and determination. No matter how much pain he was in, or how frustrated with the circumstances he became, he had a warm smile on his face. He helped all of us through the stages of grief with his strength.

He lost his battle with cancer two weeks ago, and our family is still grieving, however being able to be by his side for those final days gave each of us a certain peace of mind knowing that everything does happen for a reason. I can only hope this experience will help me personally and professionally, now being on this side of the fence, to have empathy for my patients when they are unfortunately faced with this type of life changing news. I want to thank my

patients for their 'patience' this summer when I wasn't always available to you.

Rikki Schuster is a certified Physician Assistant with 13 years of experience practicing medicine. She is currently available to see patients through Medical House Calls at 252-475-2007. www.obxmedicalhousecalls.com.