

Respiratory Care

Well Worth the Pain

My name is John D'Urbano, RRT and I've been a Respiratory Therapist in the Phoenix area since 1992. I received my education in Respiratory Care at Long Medical Institute, and Gateway Community College in Phoenix, Arizona. I worked my way through that first year of school as a night-shift security patrol supervisor. For the 2 years following I worked nights as a Respiratory Therapy Technician with one of the registries. Like many students I lost a lot of sleep, missed out on a lot of recreational activities, had a bank account that was near empty most of the time, and even had my lights turned off from time to time. There was never a day when I regretted my decision to go to school to become a Respiratory Therapist.

It didn't take long for me to completely fall in-love with my new career, and I found myself collecting certifications and memberships like they were souvenirs from a cross-country road trip. I also went to as many conferences as my bank account would allow. Yes, it's safe to say that I was an addict. *"Hello, my name is JD and I'm a respiratoraholic". 😊*

For over 2 and a half decades being a Respiratory Therapist wasn't simply what I did for a living. I was living and breathing it. Although retired, being a Respiratory Therapist is "who I am". Every Respiratory Therapist has experienced making really dumb mistakes and being the center of attention because of them. The long hours, sometimes working 16-hour shifts, and working all of the holidays and birthdays that your family could tolerate and more. There were emotionally overwhelming days, insanely stressful circumstances, and butting heads with staff from ALL medical disciplines. Writers cramp, aching feet, aching backs, and aching heads. Being splashed or hit with every boldly fluid you can think of. Getting slapped, punched, or kicked by patients who were not completely aware – OR who were aware and simply had a bad attitude. All of this for a pay scale and benefits that were mediocre at best (although I must admit, that HAS improved a lot over the years).

Balance that with days that were so heartwarming they could melt an iceberg. Making someone smile who hasn't had a reason to smile since Benjamin Franklin was president. You pissed off two thirds of the hospital staff, but at the end of the day it was WELL worth it because your actions saved a patient's life. Perhaps you came up with just the right words to make a patient or their family feel a little more at ease. Maybe you helped make the staff feel more comfortable or less stressed about a particular case or situation. My personal favorites are the thanks. A thank you from your colleagues for being there when they needed you most. A thank you from a student you were working with who recently passed a very difficult exam. A thank you from a family member for helping their loved one pass away with comfort and dignity.

After all these years there is still not one day when I have regretted my decision to go to school to become a Respiratory Therapist. If I can share my knowledge and experiences with others then I still have something to look forward to. If I taught someone something new, reminded them of something they already knew, or simply made them smile then I'm still happy. This is the mission of The BreathSounds Report Room. Enjoy...