Medical Bungling After Cancer Surgery and Graham Parker's 'Stupefaction'

February 22, 2018 By Robin McGee

I have yet another story about medical stupidity and medical goodness…. When I left the hospital, I still had a catheter. I needed a procedure (a CT cystogram) before it could be removed. This procedure checks the integrity of the bladder after a surgery. The procedure should have taken place 14 days after the surgery.

The residents on the floor forgot to book it. The discharge summary, written by the residents, said it was the surgeon's office who was to arrange the procedure. The surgeon's office thought the residents would do it. The urologist's surgical report said he would arrange it. The residents forgot to even copy the urologist on the discharge summary. So in the end, no one did it. When 21 days had gone by and I had heard nothing, I called the urologist myself in frustration. His office said they knew nothing about this referral at all. The urologist had to start from scratch, so he sent a referral to radiology, which took another week to process.

So Tuesday, February 20, was the date of the cystogram. My next task was getting a doctor to give an order to the VON to authorize removal of the catheter. Because prolonged catheter use can result in significant functional problems, the VON also needs an order to follow me after removal. But my surgeon was away on holidays, as was my family doctor. Even though nurse practitioners are empowered to give orders to the VON, mine was "not confident" and would not do it. The urologist did not want to commit without having a written report. The VON came over to help, but had to leave because there was no order, job undone. So what did I do? Andrew and I jumped back in the car, drove like demons to the hospital, ran into the radiology department, and asked if the radiology nurse could help me. I was practically ready to go postal.

The radiology nurse was a delightful young woman. She said, "I have read your book, and I would be honoured to help you."

So now the catheter is out! I am human again! Now we wait to see if I have complications.

On another note of human kindness, a VON has been caring for me very assiduously. She too has recently read The Cancer Olympics. She has called frequently, arranged supplies, ensured quality care from others, called doctors, and has been tremendously supportive.

So again, terrible care and great responsive care—just the same as my first cancer. It upsets me to

think that if I had not taken on all the calling myself about the catheter, I would still be waiting, oblivious to the neglect. Sometimes even superhuman patients cannot get care. When will doctors and their receptionists grasp that patients who have just undergone massive surgeries cannot be expected to do all that heavy lifting? Why can't people just take responsibility for the jobs we pay them for? What THE HELL is happening to patients who cannot speak English, are elderly, or are in too much pain to endlessly lobby for basic care? IT IS NOT FAIR!!!

And another crazy thing—the Gastroenterology Department at QEII called to say that they are offering me a colonoscopy appointment—from a referral sent to them in APRIL OF 2015!!! Three years ago! "We are backed up," they said.

Enough ranting. Today's song, on the theme of stupidity, is from Graham Parker and the Rumour's amusing tune "Stupefaction." I had his The Up Escalator album in 1980! Graham Parker preceded punk and new wave music. His quirky blue-collar image and sarcastic lyrics are believed to have been a major influence on other famous British musicians, namely Elvis Costello and Joe Jackson. To me, he is very Tom Petty-esque. Yes, when it comes to healthcare, I often "get to feeling like a wheel without traction."

Stupid stupid stupid hey hey hey
Same thing same way everyday
Stupefaction

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