

Having My First Surgery

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Many many years ago, my oldest brother, who is a professor at King Fahad University, came over to Mecca for a short visit. Shortly after he had arrived, we all sat together to have dinner. After dinner, I started to feel abdominal pain. I went to the kitchen, made cinnamon tea and hoped the pain would disappear. Soon everybody went to bed and I went to my room too. I tried to sleep, but I could not. The pain was still there. It was a mild continuous pain. I left my room, entered my mother's room, then each of my brothers and sisters' room. I stood close to their beds in turn, tried to wake them up to ask them to take me to the hospital, but I could not wake them up, as I did not want to disturb them so late at night. So I just walked and walked around the house, from room to room and from one floor to another. When morning prayer was due, I went to my room and pretended to be asleep lest should my mother would worry about me.

When breakfast was ready, I sat with my family and tried to get a bite of breakfast. Soon my brother Mohammed drove me to school. I was a junior high school teacher then. I went to class but I could not teach as I was in pain and was exhausted because of lack of sleep. The school principal, who was also a friend, was sympathetic. She had me lay down on the couch in her office and was joking. She said I would feel better if she cauterized me in the foot. So she did. Around noon, I got worse. I was not able to see. I could only see shadows. Around 1:30 p.m., Mohammed came to pick me up. Two of my colleagues supported me, and some of my junior high students carried my bag and cloak and walked behind. They walked me to the car. When I got into the car, I asked Mohammed to take me to the doctor. So he took me to an internist, Dr Ismael, who was a friend of my father's. Dr Ismael examined me and told me that I was having an acute appendicitis. He added that I needed surgery and that I had to

go to the hospital right away. He started to write a report about my condition, and asked me to tell him to which hospital I would like to be referred. He asked me to decide by the time he finished the report. I felt that I was in another world. All I could visualize was death. I thought that if I were to die, I would die at the best hospital, and if God meant for me to survive, I would survive no matter where I have the surgery. So I asked the doctor to refer me to a hospital of his choice. So he referred me to King Abdul-Aziz Hospital.

Mohammed drove me to the hospital. At the emergency room, three doctors looked at the report, checked me in turn, and they all agreed that I had to have surgery. Shortly, I was taken to my room. The doctors instructed that I do not to eat or drink.

I asked Mohammed to go home lest should mother worry. When mother did not see me, she asked Mohammed where I was. Mohammed could not answer. So he burst into tears. Then he told her that I was at the hospital.

While lying in bed alone, I was thinking to myself and wondering: "If I die, how will I meet God? What would I say?" I could not pray, of course. So I thought it would be a good idea to ask the nurse to go to the toilet and at least ablute. So I did.

Around 4 p.m., my mother, brothers and sisters came to the hospital. They all kissed me before I was taken to the operation room. At 5 p.m., I was in the operation room. A doctor gave me anesthesia and I did not feel anything. When I opened my eyes, I was in my room and my mother, brothers and sisters were around my bed.

The following morning, two doctors came to see me. One told me that I was lucky I survived because my appendix had ruptured. He blamed me for not coming to the hospital few days earlier. I told him that I only had the pain for 15 hours. But the doctor did not believe it.

For a few days I could not leave my bed. Every time I moved in bed even one inch, I screamed of pain in my abdomen as the doctors had inserted a drainage tube in my abdomen. One morning, a nurse came and asked me to get out of bed in order to walk. I told her I could not even bend. She thought I was spoiled. So she pulled me out of bed and I started to scream and cry of pain. I almost fainted and could not walk at all.

By the end of the week, the doctor came around noon to check on me. He told me I could go home the following morning as he thought the wound had healed. I was so happy. But unfortunately, I started to have fever shortly after the doctor had left. My sister told the nurse about the fever. The nurse could not find a doctor, as it was Friday afternoon. In the evening, the nurse came with a doctor on call. He examined me, gave me some medications, and asked the nurse to use ice packs to reduce my fever. She did that the whole night.

The following morning, my doctor came to see me. He ordered that I be taken to the operation room right away. The cause of the fever was a localized peritonitis (inflammation in the membrane that surrounds the intestines) and that required another mini surgery. He cut open the wound again and had to squeeze the puss in there. As he pressed and squeezed, I was screaming. For several days in a row, I was taken to the operation room to take the puss out. After another week I was discharged.

Having that surgery gave me a chance to reflect on many things. One of them was how lucky we human beings are. We never think about those little things that we do everyday. We always take things for granted. Lying in bed and finding it difficult to move even one inch without pain made me realize that even the tiniest movement is a blessing and a great gift from God. We move in bed while asleep, we walk and jump without thinking for a second about those movements. We never thank God for the multitude of actions and movements that

we do everyday. We never appreciate what we have got until it is gone.

Another thing was how loving and devoted mothers can be. While at the hospital, my mother did not leave me a single minute. She fed me, changed my clothes, brought me the potty and took care of me with a smile. She even visited and helped all the patients in the ward in order for God to help her daughter recover. When I went home, everyday she cooked iron-rich foods to help me replace the blood that I lost.

Finally, every time I wake up in the morning able to walk with no pain, I thank God, for health is the greatest gift of all. Anything can go wrong any minute. Health cannot be bought nor replaced.