

## Surgeons And Empathy

Insight, I believe, refers to the depth of understanding that comes by setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by letting them speak to one another. -Mary Catherine Bateson

Last week, a group of third-year medical students completed their first rotations through Surgery. They spent eight weeks doing things that no normal person would ever be asked to do. Many days, these students arrived at the hospital at 5:30 a.m. to begin 30-hour shifts seeing patients, checking laboratory reports, making rounds, and observing surgery.

In the operating room, these students saw, heard, and experienced many unthinkable things for the first time.

They held retractors for hours. They felt the warmth of another person's intestines envelop their hand and forearm as they listened to the surgeon describe findings deep in the belly. They watched as a heart resumed beating after bypass or transplant surgery. The students also spent time talking to patients and learning their stories. Many of the students were present as a person that they had gotten to know died.

For the rest of this column, go to

<http://www.froedtert.com/HealthResources/ReadingRoom/HealthBlogs/Reflections/>

[1]

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