

In praise of our health care system (Pt 2)

by BRIAN LOCKHART

We arrived at the trauma centre at St. Michael's hospital in downtown Toronto.

St. Michael's is a Level 1 trauma centre. They are experienced in dealing with severe injuries and I'm sure they have seen a lot worse than what I had.

When the paramedics wheeled me into the trauma room, it was like I was looking at a movie set.

It was a large room with maybe five examination tables in a row ready to receive the injured.

A team of at least ten medical professionals were standing in a semi-circle around the one examination table ? and they were waiting for me.

As soon as I was laid on the table, they all went to work.

Each person was examining a different part of my body or monitoring something. While one person checked my feet and legs for injuries, another was shining a light in my eyes and asking me questions.

Even in my condition, as basically a sack of potatoes at this point, I was still very impressed by this well coordinated team effort to look after a single patient.

This really gave a sense of total trust in the hospital and the people who work there.

From there I was placed in a glass walled ?acute trauma? room for most of the day. I believe they do this to keep a close eye on new arrivals to watch for any additional problems that may occur.

I was placed in a typical hospital room in the trauma/surgical unit later that evening.

Over the next several days I received top notch care.

I received a visit from both doctors who had taken my case. They advised me of what was going on, the extent of my injuries, and what course of action was needed.

In the end, I got lucky. They decided against surgery.

It's no secret that nursing staff across the country are under huge pressure these days.

The nursing staff at St. Michael's were outstanding.

Over the rotating shifts, various people dropped in to see me every few hours. I don't know all their names, titles or job descriptions, but they are all part of the nursing staff on that floor.

They would take my blood pressure, temperature, check my oxygen intake, and gave me various pills for pain and other things, and shots for different reasons. I was hooked up to oxygen and an IV solution to keep me hydrated.

Every person on that nursing staff acted in a professional manner, approached me with a smile on their face, called me by name, and

told me why they were giving me another shot and what it was for.

They didn't treat me like just another patient.

Those smiling faces made a huge difference at a time when I was alone, worried about the future, and really going through what were my darkest days.

I think I became known as 'the guy who hit a coyote?' as it was written on my chart and several people asked me about that.

Four days later, it was decided that since surgery was not necessary, I could leave the hospital and start recovering at home. By that time my black eye was fading and the scrapes on my face were healing, but I had a huge black bruise that ran from my shoulder to my hip and road rash at various places on my arms and legs.

I'm still healing in a process that is going to take months, maybe longer.

I am quite aware that all in all, I came out of this experience rather lucky. Quite often these type of accidents result in injuries far more catastrophic than I received.

My experience with the Health Care system in Ontario was that of superb quality care when I really needed it.

Yes, you may have to wait a few hours the next time you're in the ER getting your eye stitched up from an errant throw during your slo-pitch game, but most likely your injury is not as severe as the person in the next room who needs help more urgently than you do.

When you really need urgent care in this province, you're going to get it and we should all be thankful for a system that is working so well.