

Newborn Baby Lullaby in the Hospital

Osman Farooq*

Osman Farooq, University of Buffalo, Women and Children's Hospital of Buffalo, 140 Hodge Street, Buffalo, NY 14222, USA

***Corresponding author:** Osman Farooq, University of Buffalo Women and Children's Hospital of Buffalo, 140 Hodge Street, Buffalo, NY 14222, USA, Tel: 716-878-7840; Fax: 716-878-7326; E-mail: ofarooq3@buffalo.edu

When I began my internship in pediatrics, one of the things that I enjoyed most about our children's hospital was the presence of a 'newborn baby lullaby'. This was a musical announcement that would echo throughout the hospital indicating that a baby had just been born. Day or night, the lullaby was often heard, generally bringing smiles to people's faces at the thought of a cute and cuddly newborn baby.

During my internship, my favorite rotation was in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Other interns and residents dreaded their NICU rotation, mainly due to the long hours and frequent call schedule. What I liked best about my rotations through the NICU was the structure and protocols with which patients were managed. Some of my best educational experiences of residency came from the NICU. However, one of my worst patient-care memories also came from the NICU.

In the early hours of a cold January morning, the time had come to withdraw support for a 28 week

premature infant who had a long list of medical problems. She had clutched onto life for as long as she could. The family agreed that it was time to end their child's suffering. The parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles at the bedside sang their songs of praise as we extubated their little angel. The family members continued to sing and pray and take turns holding the baby as we awaited the last breath. With tears in everyone's eyes, including mine, I auscultated the baby's chest. I removed the earpieces and looked up at the family, but before I could utter a word to pronounce the time of death, the newborn lullaby sounded over the hospital's loudspeaker system, indicating that a baby had just been born. Each family member's mouth dropped open in disbelief, and the grandmother said to me, "that is just cruel." Although I agreed with her, the only thing I could manage to say was "I am sorry." Just days prior, the same lullaby had welcomed this very child who we were now saying our goodbyes to. 1:55am: Not only was this the time of death of one innocent soul, but also the time that a new one was born.

I am aware that this newborn lullaby is a rarity and that most hospitals do not feature it. Although hearing the lullaby is a source of happiness for some, we should remember that a hospital is a place where lives are not only brought into this world, but are also lost. There are places in each

hospital, such as the critical care units and emergency department, where people may be hanging onto life by a thread. Likewise, in the labor wing, although one delivery room may have a mother who gives birth to a healthy baby, the adjacent room may have a still born baby. It is not fair to someone who may be mourning or suffering to have to be reminded of what they are losing.

I have since completed my residency with subspecialty training, and I continue to work in the same hospital. I still hear the newborn lullaby, and it takes me back to that cold January morning.

Although I was unable to minimize that family's pain, perhaps we as the medical community can collectively end adding insult to people's injuries by ensuring that our hospitals have a calm and peaceful environment; especially in sensitive areas such as the NICU. We as medical professionals should never forget that empathy is a crucial component of providing optimal health care. *Primum non nocere*, or 'first do no harm,' is a phrase that one of our senior professors would often say to us. This phrase, though typically applied to physical harm, should also apply to emotional harm.