Second Opinions

Giving thanks

As we celebrate another Thanksgiving, I'd like to say how thankful I am, as a pediatrician, that there are so many excellent poison control centers across the United States and Canada. I am thankful for all the work of the late Jay Morris Arena, M.D., FAAP – a pioneer in the development of poison control centers and designer of the first childhood safety caps.

I can’t imagine dealing with a patient who has ingested a potential toxin without poison control access!

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Remembering a ‘special doctor’

Please accept my deepest sympathies for the passing of Dr. Maurice Wakeman. My family and I grieve for his loss. He was a very special doctor and person in our lives who had a profound effect on my life and the life of my daughter, who is an asthmatic.

I know I am one of hundreds of people whose lives he touched, but if I could, I would like to share with you why he will always be missed by our family.

Dr. Wakeman diagnosed my daughter as an asthmatic when she was six months old. For the next six years till the present, he gave me the courage and confidence I lacked to battle this chronic illness. He was always there for me, educating me on prevention, teaching me how to replace my fear with knowledge. He offered kindness and understanding always, rather than judgment. At the most difficult moments, he would allay my apprehensions with his confidence in my management of my daughter’s illnesses.

In the last two years, when I began to feel that I was winning the battle with asthma, Dr. Wakeman many times would finish his examinations of my daughter by saying, “Good job Jane. You’ve done a good job.”

Those moments are etched in my mind because his compliments meant so much: They encouraged me and made me feel I had momentarily mastered the illness. I hoped, too, it meant he took pride in the fact he had taught me well.

My daughter’s first moments spent with Dr. Wakeman were shortly after birth, during her first physical. When he was finished, Dr. Wakeman gave her to me in his large, confident hands and with a twinkle in his eye that told me of the joy he found in his profession. Last month, after checking my daughter for wheezing, he picked her up in those same confident hands and gave her to me as he had done dozens of times over the years.

I am so grateful we came in to see him then, for when my daughter heard me receive the news over the phone about his passing, we sat and cried together and talked about our last visit with him. I spoke to my daughter about what a wonderful person he was, and she told me how much she’d miss him. Then, she sat down and drew the card I sent to the Wakeman family.

Later, when I put her to bed that evening, I felt that she would begin the process of healing in time. Afterwards, sitting quietly in my living room, I felt in my heart that same confident, quiet voice of Dr. Wakeman’s saying, “Good job, Jane. Good job.”

It was a blessing to have had Dr. Wakeman as our pediatrician, counselor and advocate for my daughter’s needs over...