

National Youth Safety Essay Scholarship Contest Winner

Akhila Chilakala

Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education

Medicine puts the needs of patients above all else. As a future physician, I would be responsible for using this medicine to make decisions that would provide the greatest benefit to my patients while also taking into consideration their opinions and requests. This sort of responsibility can only be given to those who have the appropriate tools for doing so and simply put, medical school is not all that is needed for adequate patient care. As I learned through taking the OSHA General Industry (Healthcare) course, even if my care for the patient is exceptional, without the safe environment in all regards, patient care would nevertheless be jeopardized. This safe environment does not mean just physically safe in terms of the equipment and resources but also an environment in which the patients feels cared for, respected, and all their rights are upheld. The OSHA General Industry (Healthcare) course has given me an overview of areas of great importance that I as a future physician must be familiar with in order to ensure my patients are well cared for by their healthcare team, system and environment.

While taking multiple medical courses in university, I have realized that while we are taught so much medically, we are not really given the tools to learn the importance of safety in the healthcare system and what we can do to protect ourselves. For instance, we have learned what HIV is, what is Hep B is and other bloodborne pathogens are and how to treat them. Yet, we were not taught how to protect ourselves against contracting them from our patients. In any case, while an alive and well patient is ideal, an equally alive and well doctor is just as much desired.

In another instance, despite the number of times I've been in a hospital setting, not once was I taught how to prepare myself before going into an OR. I just copied what I saw the other nurses and doctors doing. In hindsight that could have been bad if someone did not follow protocol and then had me, unknowingly, emulate them. Once again, the lack of knowledge in such areas can bring potential harm to patients and physicians alike. The first time I have ever been given information regarding how to utilize the personal protective equipment was through this course. This course really emphasized that by educating on how to use personal protective equipment as well as the need to have and follow the Emergency Action Plan will create a more effective and safer environment.

Physicians from the moment they enter medical school are taught to do no harm, but without this training, physicians may be doing a worse job, something no good physician would do knowingly. Physicians are so important to the welfare of many, so current and future physicians need to be trained in safety and health of the job or future job to achieve the best and safest outcome possible. In doing so, this would ensure not just patient safety but also physician safety.

Health and safety training have the illusion of being straightforward. While it sometimes can be, this course has taught me that an unwarranted incident will allow the obvious to make way for irrationality. A single moment like this is all it takes to put a patient's life at risk. In taking this course, I have instilled in myself the importance of thoroughly calculating every decision I make in order to ensure the safety of those around me, as well as that of myself. Physicians are intrinsically responsible for healthcare, making it paramount that every single action we take is carefully thought out and is of the greatest benefit to all those involved.