

20 Minutes

By Andrea Eisenberg

My car says it's 2:10am, 17 degrees. I just left my warm bed and snoring husband, threw on scrubs and my contact lenses, and quickly brushed my teeth and hair. I'm shivering as the car warms up, then hear the crunch of snow as my car rolls out of the driveway. I'm the first one out on the fresh snow and it glistens in the light of my headlamps. Trying to shake the sleepy fog from my head, I breathe in this beautiful moment and tell myself I would have missed this hushed, sparkling landscape if I wasn't driving into the hospital for a delivery. The car fishtails a little as I drive down the hill, and turning the corner, the shiny metal railing on either side of the street guides my car.

I begin to ruminate about how my night will go. *Will she deliver quickly?* Like a winter wonderland, the trees are powdered with snow. *Will she deliver on my shift?* Suddenly, a deer runs out in front of me. I brake and wish her well. *Will I get home before my kids leave for school?* I drive through the sleepy town of Franklin, being careful to heed the speed limit as I have received speeding tickets here before. *Will I have time to rest before going to the office?* Quickly, I look at my pager as it is going off again. *How many patients are scheduled at the office?* I stop for a red light and realize the car is finally warm. *Will I be too tired after the office to go for a run?*

As I make a left turn and see a few cars ahead, I feel a shift inside, a shift towards focusing on my patient. *How is she feeling about the new baby?* I slow down for the salt truck ahead of me. *How is she managing with the pain of labor?* I stop for a light and am alone in the intersection, the quiet broken by the sound of a distant siren. *Does she have good support in the room?* I see the bright lights of the hospital up ahead. *Does she have good support at home?* I turn in, park, and walk up the stairs into labor and delivery, fully awake.

Each time I drive in, I find that 20-minute transition from home to hospital allows me to transition from my life to my patient's, from my needs to theirs. To make this happen, I remind myself what a special moment this is for them, and consider their own transition from being a non-parent to a parent or to becoming a parent again. And then, in this sacred time, I take my place by their side.

Andrea Eisenberg has been an obstetrician/gynecologist in the Metro Detroit area for nearly 25 years. Through her many years in women’s health, she has shared the countless intimate moments of her patients, and shared in their joys, heartaches, secrets, losses and victories. In her writing, she captures the human side of medicine and what doctors think and feel in caring for patients. She has documented these stories on her blog, www.secretlifeofobgyn.wordpress.com. Andrea is also a guest rotating blogger on *KevinMD* and has had several pieces published in *Pulse*, *Voices From the Heart of Medicine*, “More Voices” section.
