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A FIVE-MINUTE INTERACTION MADE ME REALISE HOW MUCH I HAVE LEARNT

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After more than two years as a nursing student, I was beginning to experience the additional responsibility that qualifying as a nurse would bring. This sometimes made me doubt my abilities and feel apprehensive about the future.

During a shift on a third-year placement, I was writing in a patient's case notes when a support worker informed me that another patient's oxygen saturation level was just 88 per cent on room air.

If I had been a first-year student, it is likely that I would have panicked, looked for my mentor and assumed immediately that the patient needed oxygen.

Instead, I asked for a history of the patient's other observations. I was told he had an increasing respiratory rate and heart rate, falling blood pressure, and a normal temperature. Remaining calm, I asked the support worker to accompany me to see the patient.

The man was relatively frail and had been fasting throughout the morning in preparation for afternoon surgery, which was then cancelled. He had been receiving an intravenous fluid infusion, but this was disconnected earlier in the shift.

The patient was slumped down in his bed, but otherwise appeared well. He was talkative and free from pain and discomfort. I asked the support worker to help me reposition the patient to improve his breathing, and then requested a repeat set of observations while I checked the fluid balance and prescription charts.

As the patient was no longer having surgery, I asked the support worker to encourage him to drink more while I asked my mentor to set up some more intravenous fluids.

Returning to the patient, I reviewed his observations. His oxygen saturations had gone up to 98 per cent, and his heart rate and blood pressure were returning to normal. The patient - who was reluctant to take oral fluids at times - was drinking slowly but willingly, which I made sure was documented in the nursing notes.

In a five-minute interaction, I had interpreted observations, gathered further information about the patient, made several assessments, thought critically and delegated tasks.

I had also arrived at a plan of care, sought assistance for an intervention that was beyond my student capabilities, evaluated the outcome and communicated this to other members of the team.

Remembering myself as a first-year student who would have assumed that supplementary oxygen was necessary, I gave myself a bit of credit for how much I have grown throughout my training.

I now look forward to starting my nursing career, engaging with new team members and reflecting on my practice to become better in my role.

Richard Mealor is a third-year nursing student at the University of Cumbria