

A Day in the Life of an Orthopedic Surgeon

Alyssa Tunison
 Department of Biology
 Lake Forest College
 Lake Forest, Illinois 60045

Masks and gloves on, hands scrubbed clean, instruments ready- we were ready to start. My day shadowing an orthopedic surgeon began bright and early in the operating room of St. John Medical Center in Westlake, Ohio. As I walked into the operating room that day, it was clear that I was not just watching a surgery on Grey's Anatomy anymore; I was going to be able to experience what it is like to be a surgeon first-hand.

What struck me as interesting at first was the dynamic of the room; it was chaotic yet peaceful all at the same time. Not only was there the surgeon, scrub nurse, and the anesthesiologist, but there were even more nurses, a person taking notes on the everything that happened during the surgery, representatives from competing drug companies each trying to sell their products, radiologists taking x-rays, and then me. There I was, in the corner, quietly mesmerized by all that was going on around me. As I stood looking at all of the machines with lights flashing, the steady sounds of the heart monitor beeping, the weight of the lead vest to protect me from radiation weighing on my shoulders I was anxiously awaiting for the procedure to begin.

That day I was able to see a variety of surgeries, ranging from a repair of a broken wrist to carpal tunnel releases. In one operation there was a metal being placed on a girl's collar bone that was fractured as the result of a soccer injury. In another I watched x-rays being taken as a long metal rod was placed into a femur that was snapped in half, gradually seeing picture by picture the progress of its repair. Perhaps my favorite surgery of the day though was a man who needed to get a ganglion caused by arthritis removed from his hand, so that it would not start eating away at the tendons. I watched as the surgeon made a horizontal incision at the bottom of the hand and file the hand open, leaving all of the tendons and bones exposed.

Yet balancing out all of this commotion, was the surgeon who, amidst all of the chaos and other conversations and activities going on around him, was able to tune everything else out and direct all his focus to the patient on the table. He was able to put aside the many thoughts and demands of the day and orchestrate an operating room that ran like a well-oiled machine. All it took was a one word command, "Scalpel," "X-Ray," "Suture" for things to get done. It's as if the fast-pace of the day was suddenly switched into slow motion. There was so much attention to detail put into each intricate motion of the surgeon's hands, every move was thoughtful and deliberate. After one surgery was done, he moved right on to the next, with me following excitedly at his coattails.

Eight hours and seven procedures later, my day as an orthopedic surgeon's shadow had come to end. I was sad to have to leave the hospital, but thankful for the opportunity to see what only some people are able watch on television. I was content being just like a fly on the wall, watching with big eyes all that was going on around me. I have always known that I want a career in medicine and this experience only solidified that knowledge and opened my eyes to the world of surgery. There is nothing more exciting to me than being able to see

all of the intricacies of the human body and to make them work correctly again when things inevitably go wrong. This experience is one that I highly recommend to anyone considering a career in medicine. When I returned to Lake Forest College in the fall I was determined to make this new dream a reality. With a major in biology, I hope to continue on and pursue a career in surgery.



St. John Medical Center, located in Westlake, Ohio, is where I observed the surgeries. With physicians in over 50 different specialties, it provides acute healthcare to a variety of different patients.

Note: Eukaryon is published by students at Lake Forest College, who are solely responsible for its content. The views expressed in Eukaryon do not necessarily reflect those of the College. Articles published within Eukaryon should not be cited in bibliographies. Material contained herein should be treated as personal communication and should be cited as such only with the consent of the author.