Podcast 1: Assessment Story JG Transcript

Real-life situations help illustrate the ramifications of our actions. These assessment stories will help you gain a better understanding of the importance of collecting patient data, utilizing critical thinking, and evaluating abnormal findings in the practice setting.

When I was a new graduate nurse, maybe a year out of graduating with my BSN, I was working in the neuro-surgical ICU in a level 1 trauma center. I was managing a relatively healthy patient, considering the types of patients we had in our unit. Mr. M was a car accident victim and had several injuries to his ribs, abdomen, liver, and kidneys. He was post-surgery day 1 and I was doing my morning assessment on him before getting him out of bed with physical therapy. I started in my normal procedure and worked my way from his head to his toes. When I got to his feet, I had trouble finding the dorsalis pedis pulse on his right foot. I moved my fingers around feeling for any sign of a pulse. I looked at the foot and it was pink, warm, with no signs of trouble, but I persisted with trying to find the pulse, figuring I just missed it or needed a more skilled hand. I used a Doppler to try and find it as well, and finally, after 10–20 minutes of searching, I gave up! The head of trauma services was rounding and happened to pass by my room. So, I reached out for assistance in locating the pulse, but he was unable to find the pulse as well. He ordered a few tests and sure enough, the patient had a medium-sized clot in his foot. This clot was extremely dangerous for a patient with lung and kidney issues as it could have become an embolus during the movement of physical therapy, endangering potentially the respiratory, neuro, or cardiac status of the patient. The patient was taken to interventional radiology, the clot was successfully removed, and we were immediately able to feel a pulse again in the patient's foot. The head of trauma surgery told me it was my detailed assessment that helped maintain the safety and health of this patient.