

Magical Medicine

A magician shows nursing and medical students how to add some magic to patient interactions BY LYNN DURHAM, RN

Have you ever heard of children looking forward to a medical visit? They just might, with a little sleight of hand!

Magician B.J. Hickman, of Dover, NH, recently presented techniques for distracting and relaxing young patients to medical and nursing students at the University of New England in Biddeford, ME. The lecture was arranged by Rob Parker, medical student and head clown of the Clown Patch Club at the College of Osteopathic Medicine. The program was part of its "Humor in Medicine Week."

Humor & Health Connection

Medical research has established the positive connection between humor and health. Studies show how humor boosts immunity with increases in SIgA, IgM, IgG, natural killer cell activity and activated T cells. Humor also enhances memory and learning, the ability to cope and is an aid to pain tolerance, studies say.

But it's the reduction of stress and anxiety and the eliciting of the relaxation response that is the main thrust of Hickman's magical medicine presentation.

Nurses have appreciated the fresh ideas and simple tricks Hickman taught them for diverting attention and calming fears young patients. In fact, one RN furthering her education thought they could be used to allay anxiety for any age. The students were surprised at their ability to accomplish simple magic tricks, curiosities and diversions with a little practice.

Jeni Hathorn, RN, said she would definitely use them when she works with pediatric patients. "The techniques will keep the interaction positive and



ROPE TRICK: Magician B.J. Hickman shows Jeni Hathorn, RN, from Ithaca, NY, a few distraction techniques to help young patients. *courtesy Jacki Cianciosi*

happy," she said. "BJ showed things that were really simple and easy to do. It doesn't require a lot of props, either. I can see how you could incorporate these ideas into practice. It's an opportunity to turn something that could be scary into something less scary and maybe even fun."

An Innovative Tool

The magic presentation participants were entertained and trained in a delightful new skill. Those in attendance said they considered this innovative tool a valuable commodity to put in their medical bag of tricks, even simply to add more joy to the workplace in general.

To release mysterious powers on your next patient, an easy trick with your "magic tongue depressor" can be found at www.pediatrics.com/p/BJFreeTips.htm. ■

Lynn Durham is a well-being coach who lives and writes in Gilmanton, NH. She knows about humor, often presenting programs about it.