

## **"From Complacency to Mastery: Lessons in Humility from a Surgical Setback"**

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” – Martin Luther King Jr.

In urology, as in all surgical fields, confidence is essential. Yet, confidence can teeter into overconfidence, leading to humbling experiences that redefine us. I faced this reality as a chief resident, just when I thought I had “hit my stride.”

Penile implants were procedures I had grown comfortable performing. With repetition came efficiency, and with efficiency, confidence. Over time, I began to see these surgeries as routine. This subtle shift in mindset, set the stage for an unexpected lesson. On what seemed like an ordinary day, a slight miscalculation during deployment of the furlow led to a urethral injury. The patient remained stable, but the implications were significant—an increased risk of infection, prolonged catheterization, and emotional distress for the patient.

In the immediate aftermath, I was consumed by self-doubt. How did I let this happen? Was I becoming careless? Did I truly belong in sexual medicine? These questions haunted me as I replayed the case in my mind, scrutinizing every step where confidence had given way to complacency.

As surgeons, we pride ourselves on precision and execution, but the true measure of a professional lies in how they respond to challenges. Martin Luther King Jr.’s words resonated deeply: growth occurs not in comfort but in adversity. That urethral injury, though painful, became a turning point—a stark reminder of the gravity of our work and the vigilance it demands.

I reassessed my approach to surgery, recognizing that no procedure is ever “routine.” I adopted a practice of pausing at critical moments to mentally reset, reaffirming the importance of deliberate care, even in familiar tasks. I also learned to grant myself grace. Residency is grueling, and while the pressure to perform flawlessly is immense, perfection is an illusion. Setbacks are not failures; they are opportunities for growth. In that urethral injury, I found a profound teacher.

This experience also shaped my role as a mentor. Today, I emphasize to younger residents the delicate balance between confidence and humility. I share my story to remind them to respect every surgery as if it were their first, regardless of how proficient they become. It’s not about avoiding mistakes but about how we respond and grow from them.

Looking back, the urethral injury was more than a complication; it was a catalyst for transformation. Growth arises from discomfort, and resilience is forged in moments of self-reflection. As I continue my journey in urology, I carry this lesson with me, knowing that each setback, when met with humility and resolve, shapes us into better surgeons and, ultimately, more compassionate physicians.

In the operating room and in life, every challenge is an opportunity—to learn, to grow, and to master the balance between confidence and care.