

I've been thinking...



The Good Old Golden Rule  
March 2009

**I've been thinking** about contractors, physicians, presidents and the Quids.

A successful and respected contractor took his son under his wing to teach him the trade. The father's philosophy was simple: Build each home as if you were building it for yourself.

After several years, he assigned a project to the young man, informing him that for this one he was on his own. "I will see you when the house is finished," he said. "Just remember, build it as if you were building it for yourself."

The son figured that without his father watching, he could cut a few corners and no one would ever know. So he bought substandard framing materials, lower-rated insulation, and thinner dry wall than his father would have used. Paying less for the materials, he pocketed the savings.

When the house was completed, the father came to see the finished product. On the surface, everything seemed to match the quality of his own projects. "Looks great," he said. "Congratulations! Now, I have some good news. You have built this house for you and your family. It's my gift to you for the work you've done with me over the years."

In 1995, I toured the Centennial Medical Center in Nashville with the director of pharmacy. While walking through the main lobby, we bumped into The Honorable Bill Frist, MD, and newly elected US Senator from Tennessee. After greetings and introductions, the senator explained that he had come to visit his father, Thomas Frist, who was in critical care following major surgery. Turns out the senator's father, also a physician, was the founder of this Top-100 hospital and the cofounder of its parent Hospital Corporation of America.

I could not help but think about how this dedicated physician, while building a topnotch hospital for the community he loved, was at the same time building the hospital in which he and his children would one day be treated as patients.

Several months ago, my wife was in our community hospital being treated for a staph infection. I watched as a student nurse hung and started an IV, then left the room. Ten minutes later, she returned to scan the bar codes on Cinda's wristband and IV bag to confirm a match. Up to that point, I didn't know our hospital had BPOC in place. So I asked the nurse, "I'm interested in this bar-coding thing. Can you explain how it works?" While she didn't have

acclue that I have had a fifteen-year obsession with bar coding, she apparently sensed she had been caught administering a drug before scanning.

The next day, the charge nurse of a new shift came into the room to hang another IV. This time she scanned patient and bag before starting the infusion. Again, I said, "I'm fascinated with this bar-code technology. Tell me how it works."

To my surprise, she hesitated and asked, "Are you Mark Neuenschwander?" How did she know? After all, my wife's last name is Peters. "I read your monthly articles," she said, "and we leaned on your report while getting ready for bar coding." Turns out, this nurse is the hospital's BPOC champion, and her director of pharmacy had attended [The unSUMMIT for Bedside Barcoding](#), of which I am a cofounder. Not only had I helped motivate my community hospital to adopt bar coding, but I had also contributed to its bar-coding practices.

It honestly had not dawned on me that by helping others achieve safer points of care I was contributing toward protecting my wife and eventually myself when it's my turn to be stuck with needles.

This afternoon Dennis Quaid, winner of a 2002 Golden Globe Award for his performance in *Far from Heaven*, appeared on The Oprah Winfrey Show. He and his wife, Kimberly, talked briefly about their trip to hell and back last Thanksgiving when their twins nearly died from an overdose of Heparin at Cedars Sinai. Mostly, though they talked about how thankful they were that their babies had survived. Under circumstances which many might have turned bitter, the couple perceived blessing in it all. Dennis said, "I just remember thinking, that this happened for a reason. These two little kids, they're going to change the world...to raise public awareness and to get something done about computerized-record keeping and bar coding in hospitals that's going to save lives—a lot of lives." Dennis and his wife are committed to helping hospitals do for others' children what they would have hospitals do for theirs (e.g. [The Quaid Foundation](#)).

So, are you a nurse, pharmacist, CEO, or physician? Are you a healthcare-technology developer, vendor, or consultant like me?

On the bicentennial of his birth, Abraham Lincoln's appeal is as relevant as ever: "Whatever you are, be a good one." If asked to expand on what it means to "be a good one," there's a good chance our current President's favorite President would have pulled out, as I understand he often did, the good old Golden Rule:

"In everything, do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Most of us won't be winning Golden Globes but none of us can lose by sticking with the Golden Rule.

What do you think?



Mark Neuenschwander

PS One of my favorite movies is *The Rookie*. In it, Dennis Quaid played a small-town Texas baseball coach who makes the major leagues after agreeing to try out if his high school team made the state playoffs. Today on [Oprah](#), in big-league style, Quaid commented on Cedar Sinai's commitment to utilize bar code technologies throughout their medication-use process to avoid the kinds of errors his children experienced from being repeated. "I applaud Cedars for what they've done since then," he said, then dipping into baseball's lexicon, he commended the hospital: "They've really stepped up to the plate to alleviate this problem. They really are up at the top now in raising the standard of care." I fully agree and tip my hat to this great hospital, which was just a mile away from my parents home of 30 years.

[mark@hospitalrx.com](mailto:mark@hospitalrx.com)

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