

# HELLO OTHER

## Book One – DISCOVERY

By S C Dinsdale

### Chapter 6. Consent 103

One evening early in the rotation when our team is on call, I'm called down to Fracture Clinic to see a woman with a dislocated shoulder. Her story is vague and her breath smells of alcohol. Unfortunately she can't remember exactly how many drinks she's had, so I choose a cautious dose of narcotic pain relief and sedation. Alcohol is a general anaesthetic, and aside from being dangerous in overdose, it increases the sedative effect of other sedating medications. After speaking with Mick by phone, he agrees to come to ED and asks me to set everything up. Junior house officers aren't permitted to give intravenous sedation or narcotics without senior supervision due to the risk of inhibiting a person's automatic drive to breathe.

When Mick arrives, I inform him about the unknown amount of alcohol this young person has on board. After he checks and approves my choice of conservative doses, I begin to inject the diluted medication slowly into her vein, pausing to assess her breathing. Following several pauses, Mick asks, why is it taking me so long? When I remind him about the alcohol, he loses patience, telling me to hurry up. But I refuse, because our patient is relaxed and her breathing rate has slowed.

"Come on Jane, you can inject faster than that!"

"No, she's quite intoxicated," I reply firmly once more.

"Okay, then let me do it!"

As I step obediently out of the way, Mick reaches for the syringe and promptly empties the remaining third of the medication into her vein, followed by a flush of saline. Within thirty seconds, the patient stops breathing...

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