Helping people through their darkest hours

Supporting families through periods of anxiety can be a humbling but rewarding experience

On my last placement I met two wonderful people who were in the most frightening situation parents can find themselves in. Their baby had become extremely unwell and they had taken him to the emergency department. The baby had then been rushed into resus and then theatre, and was about to be transferred to another hospital.

Learning opportunity

I had worked as a healthcare assistant in the same department, and had become worried that I would revert to my old role and miss out on learning opportunities. However, I was lucky to be surrounded by a supportive team and I was given an opportunity to go to theatre with the baby, and then to wait for news with the parents. Sitting with them while we waited to hear about their baby’s condition was one of the most difficult things I have ever had to do, but also one of the most rewarding.

We talked for a long time about the baby. He was only months old, but his parents already had countless stories to tell about him and photographs to show me. Their patience and resilience during this long, agonising wait for news was humbling. I could see their fear, but also how much they wanted to talk about their baby, however painful it was for them to do so.

After they had left I went back and finished the rest of my busy night shift. I had no time to reflect on what had happened until the next day.

People often ask me: ‘How can you do this job?’ My answer after that night is: ‘How could I not?’

Sitting with those parents that night was an incredible privilege and to be the nurse who can help people through their darkest hours is an honour.