



THE GRADY REPORT

Aetna Employee Newsletter

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Summer

Issue 2



Making the decision to lead a healthy lifestyle requires both commitment and discipline. Balancing shift work with exercise, family obligations, and social events is inarguably a challenge, however, not impossible. In this section you'll find a sample workout routine, and an interview with a health-conscious Aetna employee, Shanon Whalen.

Plan to Perform the CPR... Not Need It



Ok let me start by admitting that, when Bob first asked me to answer some questions about my recent head first dive into the wonderful world of weights and squats and BCAAs, I began to question his sanity. I mean come on, here I am an overweight paramedic who literally just started going to the gym regularly 5 months ago, what could I possibly know? Then I started thinking more about my life's journey in EMS, the good, bad, and ugly, and I realized that maybe I did have something to offer in the way of motivation (or the swift kick in the you know what that some of us need). So I am going to tell you my story about the healthy lifestyle changes I made, and who knows maybe you'll decide you don't want to be stuck in your same old same rut too!

In West Philadelphia born and raised..... just kidding... it wasn't Philly and I wasn't some fresh prince of Bel Air. It was actually right here in CT not far from Hartford and I was a fresh faced 17 year old, three season senior athlete, who decided I wanted to follow in my family's footsteps and make a difference (**enter EMS stage right**). I have always been tall, bigger, big boned (enter whatever adjective you'd like) however I was a strong athlete who won

school, conference, and state awards, and never had trouble keeping up with the game. When I went off to college, the sports kind of stopped except for when I wanted to play a pickup game, and I was going strong with EMS and school. My sophomore into junior year of college, I took the leap from volunteering to commercial and started working full time (60+ hours) as well as a 4-5 course class schedule at school. This is where things start to get a little lazy. When working nights, weekends, swing shifts, every single day of the week, whatever the crazy schedule we've made for ourselves is, it is very easy to lose sight of your health and fitness standards. Running from work to class then back to work again leaves little room for healthy home cooked meals with daily gym time. Then medic school hit and it was even worse with extremely horrible eating habits, drinking, very little sleep, and more stress than one person should have to deal with. If I am being totally honest, I never really noted my drastic change from high school athlete running daily to an overweight medic who was getting winded carrying the gear up three flights of stairs. When that blinding epiphany hit, I realized if I wanted to live past 40 then I needed to change something in my lifestyle to make that happen (**enter the gym, a nutritionist, a whole boatload of nerve and doubt but also determination and will stage left**)

So what did I do, you ask? Well here's the big secret... I called in the experts who know what the hell they are doing! I started asking my gym rat coworkers for advice and ideas. I decided to not be another fat, lazy medic, but try and change that about myself and more importantly for myself. We can lie and be blind to our position in society all we want, but the truth of the matter is our job is physical and demanding and stressful. Not only that, people will not trust you to help them if you look like you need the oxygen or might be having the heart attack when you get up the stairs to their floor. Our job may not be physically strenuous every day, as are our counterparts in public safety who are chasing bad guys and hauling high rise packs up 13 flights of stairs, but what will you do when the power goes out

and you have to carry those patients from the high rise building just to walk back up to get the next one? What about that code you're working and fighting so hard to keep alive? You keep getting pulses back only to lose them again, so the CPR must go on, even though you're already exhausted and an hour into the code? Are you willing to just stop being their heart and lungs because you are tired? Your answer to that question should be no! We in EMS are bred to fight to the finish, so we don't stop and we don't give up no matter how tired. That is why we need to maintain a level of physical fitness and healthy living for ourselves and for our patients as well. Some key factors I have found to be necessary to a successful healthy EMS lifestyle (or making your own attempt to reach that healthy level) are diet, exercise, and find your own way to de-stress in a healthy non-destructive manor.

So let's start with our favorite- the dreaded diet. Listen, I like pizza and beer as much as the next guy. You don't get to obese status by loving salad every meal, so I am not going to sit here and preach about only eating vegan, gluten free, blah blah, enter whatever diet or fad. I will, however, throw out some suggestions and observations I have made over my years in EMS. For many in EMS, their diets consist of copious amounts of caffeine, fast food grabbed between calls, and whatever free ice cream, pizza or goodies some hospital or company has decided we deserve that day. No mandatory meal breaks, weird hours (as in overnights) and lack of places to reheat food lead to unhealthy, easy to grab food choices.

One of the biggest changes I found to help and make a difference is prepping my food ahead of my shifts, following a healthy meal plan, or set caloric intake diet. Simply packing yourself snacks and meals so you have healthier (and most importantly non-fast food/take out) options is a step in the right direction, and secret bonus to bringing your meals with you – saves a ton of money! By hiring a nutritionist or giving yourself healthy options for downtime snacks to simply preparing your meals so you can grab and go, you will be taking a step towards less weight gain, healthier eating and trying to avoid that long term dreaded deadly high cholesterol and hypertension combo!

Another major factor in our lifestyle is the fact that we sit, and sit, and sit some more, with random bursts of adrenaline and 3rd floor carry downs. Let's be honest, a majority of our 12-hour shift is pretty sedentary. However, at the click of a mic, it can be physical and demanding. What we have to start seeing, with eyes open, is the fact that we need to be more prepared for the physical than we are for the sitting around. My nutritionist currently has me on a minimum of 30 minutes of cardio, four times a week. In my opinion though, if you are doing any cardio, however many times a week, you are still, as they say, "lapping the people on the couch". We love to hate it; it can be boring and eye-gouge worthy, but cardio is what keeps us from keeling over when we hit that 3rd floor landing. It a necessary evil to maintain a basic level of cardiovascular endurance and, bonus, if you combine it with healthy eating, you can lose some serious weight!



Now that cardio is out of the way, let's talk weights. Not everyone needs to weight train, not everyone needs to get so jacked we can't see your neck and you are ripping your uniform shirts like the hulk, but everyone (and I mean everyone no matter age, gender, height, weight, etc.) need to be able to lift safely and effectively. If you know this and are rocking it, then high five! Keep up the good work! If

you are feeling a little lacking in the lifting department, no worries either- hit a gym, do some body weight calisthenics at home, anything to slowly build up that body strength so that lifting those 200-pound patients feels like carrying in all the groceries in one trip. We need to be able to lift, we need to be able to lift safely, and if we can't, we need to make an effort to fix what we lack and not rely on the fire department or our partners to pick up our slack. I



have found that a combination of cardio and lifting is what works for me and I have also found it provides a healthy outlet to deal with our exponentially stressful lives.

Speaking of stressful lives, if you have worked EMS for at least one shift you know the stress that comes with performing this job. Remember all that sitting until the mic click I talked about, well that mic click is like a direct link to our brain and our sympathetic nervous system. I don't know about y'all but 13.5 years of EMS and I still feel my breath quicken and the heart rate increase when driving to a call. It's not about being sparky, it's not about nerves, it's simply about the adrenaline rush of the unknown factors, the possibility of saving someone, the 'Damn I hope I don't mess up the differential diagnosis on this'. It's natural and instinctively human. It's the 'fight or flight' response, and, if you all are like me, with every call you're prepared to "fight". Downside to these adrenaline rushes, they also come with a side of stress. Bad calls, high volume days, long hours, messed up circadian rhythm; they all slowly eat away at our bodies and subsequently cause health and mental problems of their own. This sometimes leads to us trying to find ways to cope and deal without talking about

it or seeking help.

The stereotype that we all should be unfeeling robots who can go go go from call to call without any emotional damage or empathic concern eating away at us is what, in my option, causes burnout, ETOH abuse, depression and, sometimes, suicide. This typecast is slowly damaging our EMS community from the inside out. Do yourself a favor; for your mental health, your family, even your future patients, find your healthy stress outlet, find your person (the one who will listen, not judge, and just be there), talk to your partner or coworker or management when you do decide it gets too much, and start utilizing the resources available to us all. Trust me when I say, your body, mind, friends, family, partners and, ultimately, you will thank yourself in the long run when you're not a cranky washed out ex-EMS person with cirrhosis and no one around to care.

Well y'all, that's my story and I am sticking to it. I might not have reached all my goals and plans yet but I am getting there, especially with the daily encouragement and praise I get from my amazing coworkers, friends and family. I am lucky to say I love my job and I love making a difference. I am glad I made some changes so I can hopefully keep helping and caring for a long time to come (maybe I will even admit finally that I am an EMS lifer and actually live to tell the tale). If we start taking better care of ourselves and each other, we are ultimately taking better care of our patients. Strong Bodies and Strong Minds makes for Strong Compassion and Care! Go out there, make a difference, and be kind to one another!



Case Study

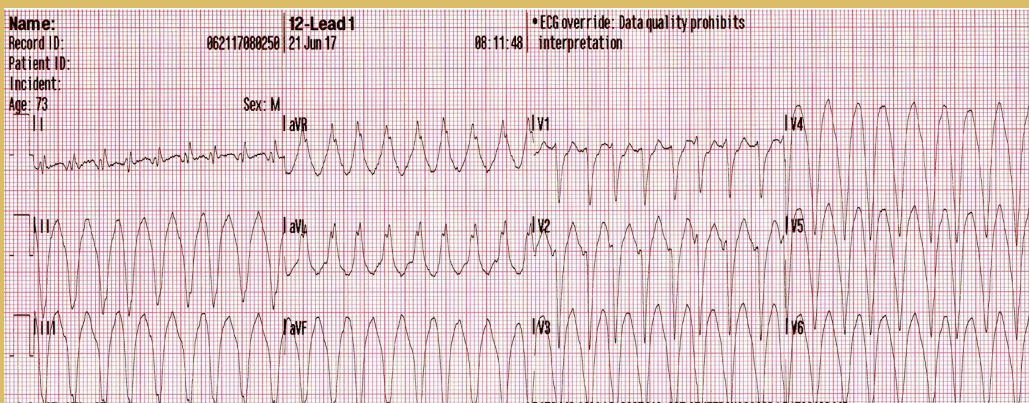
Patient: 73-year-old male complaint of chest pain

Scene: Found patient sitting in chair on arrival. Patient presented diaphoretic, speaking full sentences, A+Ox4, stating he has substernal chest pressure going down his left arm. Pressure feels "like his previous heart attacks." Patient was walking outside to clean his pool when pain began, and came back inside and when the pain didn't go away after 30 minutes he called 911.

History: HTN, GERD, MI x3, CABGx5, and STENT placement

Medications: Coumadin, Ramipril, Omeprazole, Atorvastatin, Zetia, Metoprolol, Citalopram, Clonazepam, Prednisone and HCTZ

Allergy: NKDA



Vitals

B/P: 100/Palpation

Pulse: 180bpm

RR: 16

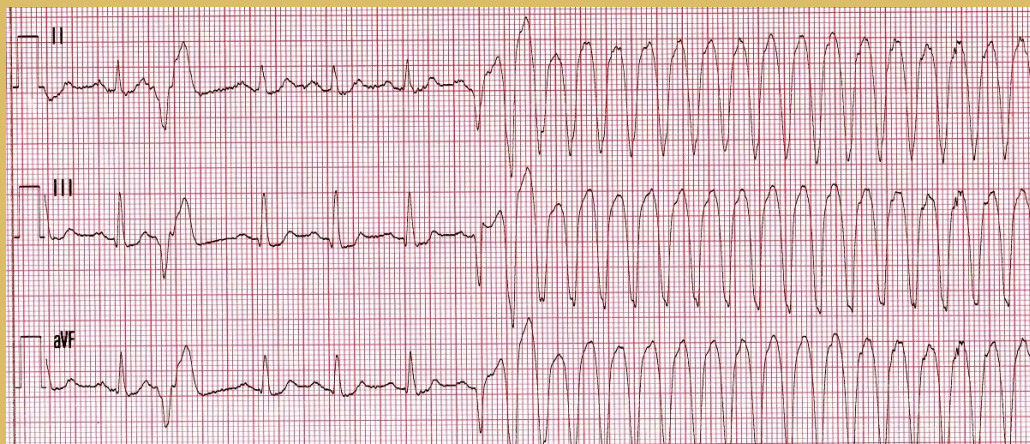
LS: Clear

SPO2: 98%

- 1) What is the rhythm?
- 2) What would your initial treatment be?

Treatment = 150mg Amiodarone via IV drip

Result – (NSR w/ PVCs) then converts back to V-Tach



Vitals

B/P: 80/60

Pulse: 200 bpm

RR: 16

LS: Clear

SPO2: 98%

Patient is still alert and orientated

- 3) What is your treatment now?
- 4) What do you think is causing the recurring V-tach?
- 5) What transport considerations should you make with this patient?

Find out next Quarter what happened!!!!

With each publication, our newsletter will honor an employee who has demonstrated a commitment to patients and co-workers alike via a positive attitude, work ethic, and overall inspiring demeanor. This issue's selection is EMT Anthony Valentine.



By: Brendan Hart, Student Intern

Anthony Valentine attended Bloomfield High School and graduated in 2011 before continuing his education at Central Connecticut State University. He graduated from Central in 2016 with a degree in biology and he joined AETNA shortly after. Valentine's life goal is to create a media enterprise that will motivate, inspire and provide intellectual resources for both millennials and their parents. He has already

made tremendous progress in the form of his media group called, *Kulture Media Group*, and its magazine titled, *KultureMAG*. The Mission of the magazine is to "showcase fashion, art, hobbies, music, life and innovation for high school and college aged youth." He currently distributes his quarterly magazine to high schools around Connecticut and Massachusetts with plans for national expansion.

"A resource was needed...A resource that would appeal to my age group's preferences in addition to presenting stories celebrating individuality, success, self-expression, and self-worth...and the resource became *KultureMAG*," said Valentine in an interview with Innovation Destination Hartford, a group of entrepreneurs and other professionals that showcase start-ups in the Hartford area.

KultureMAG is very different from a traditional magazine, there are rarely all-white pages filled with just text. Instead, Valentine's magazine is filled with photos taken by photographers, artwork by street artists, inspirational quotes and interviews of budding musical artists, many of whom have their roots in Connecticut. Valentine incorporates these vibrant pictures, artwork, and short quotes to relate with today's youth and their active use of social media.



Employee Spotlight

The stories and interviews are about individuals that use their talents to make a positive impact on their communities, the world and express their individuality and creativity. This is the vision Valentine has for *KultureMAG* to inspire today's youth to identify, develop and leverage their own talents, become positive contributors in their community and continue their education.

Valentine also gives motivational presentations which he has done so at a number of high schools and universities throughout the state. Valentine's most recent creation, he calls "4 The Kulture." 4 The Kulture, is a collegiate experience that is built for the millennial audience. Aimed to build social capital, diversity, self-confidence and to explore the one thing that college students spend their time questioning, their Why. These presentations focus on many of the values that are taught in the magazine; such as inspiration, hope and education of self. One specific example is a part of the presentation he calls "What's your why?" which focuses on what keeps you going forward toward your goals in life.

Valentine has even bigger plans for *Kulture* in the future, including expanding *KultureMAG* to other geographical regions and making it a household name.

"I envision *Kulture* helping the development of creators and innovators across the Northeast. I envision *Kulture* being a large resource of hope, faith and growth for young adults increasing self-esteem and confidence." Valentine told innovation Destination Hartford

"I will say that whatever I feed out into the world through the magazine, through the television show I may come out with, through the creative directing- it's going to help influence someone to become a better person." Valentine said in an interview with the Hartford Courant.

