Twitter Thread by Amy Cho, MD MBA

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Lots of folks say “you must be brave” when they find out I work in the ER.

It’s true that I don’t (usually) get upset at the sight of blood. But there are plenty of things that scare me.

A non-exhaustive list of things this emergency physician is afraid of:

Choking

Because I’ve seen a child choke on a hot dog or grape that wasn’t cut lengthwise.

Door slamming

Because I’ve had to repair way too many fingertip amputations in little kids.

Throwing sticks

Because one time I saw a kiddo lose their eye after an innocent game with a sibling.

Jumping on the trampoline with your dog

Because...just don’t do it. It’s a bad idea.

Influenza

Because I’ve seen healthy kids, pregnant women and adults die from influenza.

Infant suffocation from unsafe sleep

Because I’ve held a mom as she crumpled in my arms and screamed when I told her we have tried everything to no avail.

Drownings

Because I've had to tell a parent I couldn't reverse what happened in the blink of an eye to the beautiful child with the sun-kissed still-damp curls.

Gunshot wounds

Because I've seen way too many bodies, families and communities torn apart in milliseconds.

Stroke

Because I've seen how it robs vibrant and proud patients of their voice and independence.

Heart attacks

Because I've seen patients stay at home while their heart muscle is died and they developed disabling heart failure because they are worried their insurance will say it "wasn't an emergency" and deny their claims.

Chemical dependency

Because I've seen patients suffer and die because they cannot access lifesaving treatment.

Depression

Because I've held the hand of a spouse and parent talking on the phone to their young child and holding it together so they can figure out how to tell them they only have one parent now.

Cancer

Because I've struggled to treat the pain and suffering of patients and their families who bravely support their loved one, knowing they are losing them too soon and powerless to change the course.

COVID-19

Because I've cared for patients who have died OF COVID. Because I've cared for patients whose spouses died OF COVID. Because I don't want to be the link in the transmission chain that leads to someone else's death. Because I don't want to risk leaving my kids orphaned.

I'm afraid of these things because they are real risks.

Some are big risks. Some are small.

Some are common and cause temporary pain and suffering.

Some are small risks but disastrous with permanent damage.

Many things about our health cannot we cannot control. It’s hard to accept. But some things we can.

We cut the hot dogs (lengthwise!).

We wear helmets and seatbelts.

We get flu shots.

We have a system at the pool.

We have a no slamming doors rule.

Please know that COVID-19 scares the doctors and nurses and other healthcare workers.

We are afraid.

Because we have witnessed what it can do if you or your loved ones get severe COVID. We know that money, power and fame can’t purchase a cure.

The good news is that we know what helps to prevent infection and spread.

Wearing a mask. Distancing. Avoiding large indoor gatherings. Hand hygiene. Quarantining, even when it is inconvenient. Supporting patients who don’t have the resources to isolate or shield their elders.

Don’t confuse recklessness and hubris with bravery or bad luck.

Let’s keep normalizing compassion and care for for one another and save lives.