Deb's Page

Just the Facts, Ma'am

Deb Gauldin, RN, PMS

DEB GAULDIN is a childbirth educator who performs songs and humorous tales ("Hormone Affirming Music and Humor for Women") about pregnancy, childbirth, and the adjustments to parenthood. She lives outside Chicago, Illinois.

Abstract

In this column, the author humorously relates how a childbirth educator transporting medical antiques caused a stir in airport security.

Journal of Perinatal Education, 12(2), 54–55; humor, childbirth education.

"Put it on the table and step away," commanded the young security guard as I stumbled back and stared in disbelief. With the urgency of a code blue, he paged a supervisor and a flurry of men in crisp white shirts descended upon me. The scene: O'Hare International Airport. The contraband: three tiny glass vials filled with lactation suppressant, circa 1920s.

In addition to songs and humor celebrating health care professionals, I often display medical antiques. Conference participants enjoy seeing advertisements for old obstetric tables, vintage maternity corsets, and prehistoric-looking breast pumps. I typically show slides that chronicle improvements in perinatal care while I sing lyrics like, "What can I learn from you—from your lifetime and what you've been through?" It's all quite harmless, and a very sweet tribute to our profession.

But the zealous gentlemen wielding security wands weren't the least enamored. Basically, it was suggested that I answer only the questions asked. Shades of Sgt. Friday in *Dragnet*: "Just the facts, ma'am. Only the facts."

First, the team discovered a rusty catgut suture in a yellowed, deteriorating, cellophane sleeve. This had become inadvertently tucked under the blue velvet of my display case. I gladly surrendered this "sharp" object, with apologies. But I wasn't so quick to part with the vials of medication nestled neatly in their original aqua cardboard packing case. The problem: I failed miserably

when trying to remember what the vials contained, and the label wasn't ringing any bells. Supervisor Barney Fife arrived just as I was straining across the width of the table to read the faded pharmacology insert. Passengers following me in line were becoming noticeably restless and were being allowed to pass on through as I proclaimed with relief, "Oh! This was used to dry up breast milk in 1928!" Everyone was aghast. Now they were stepping back.

Then the curse of the "humorist-in-me" took effect. My annoyance turned to absurd thoughts of hijacking a flight to a tropical destination by threatening to dry up the crew's milk supply. Next came images of perky young women with flip hairdos adorned in little felt hats. These Nick at Nite-era stewardesses were politely asking, "Coffee, tea, or me?" It got worse, but I need not continue. (Though my husband will tell you this is

the very kind of industry humor only another childbirth educator could truly appreciate!)

After a stern reminder that any joking with regard to national security can be cause for arrest, I was permitted to proceed with antiques carefully repacked. The flight was uneventful from that point on, though I had to call upon every ounce of self-control when the flight attendant asked if I would like cream or sugar!

Note: Deb travels nationally, presenting keynote speeches for perinatal practitioners. For booking information, call 800-682-2347 or visit www.debgauldin.com. Deb's CDs and tapes contain songs about pregnancy, childbirth, and the adjustment to parenthood. They are available through Lamaze International (800-368-4404).