



Stories

I thought I had a pretty good sense of how stories play into the work we have been doing with Positive Deviance.

Some stories are used to explain what lies at the heart of Positive Deviance

Many of you have heard the story Jerry Sternin tells about the famous Sufi mystic Nasrudin and his smuggling operation. *See below*

We tell the "Vietnam" story to illustrate Positive Deviance.

Then there are the stories of how MRSA has touched our lives

I have so many now that float around in my head - each still as piercing as the day I first heard them.

There stories we encourage each other to tell about the great solutions that have been discovered and acted upon in our facilities.

Eileen turning a cancellation in the Cath Lab into an impromptu D & A, the Palmer method, John Ringdal's "card" for keeping post-op rooms supplied and Dora with her solution to MRSA patients in the pre-op holding area.

But in New Mexico I came across a different type of story.

These were the stories people told about a single interaction or event that changed their own behaviors forever.

Dr. S is an freshly minted internal medicine physician. She told us she had spent a month on rotation with an attending physician that was relentless in compelling all his students, interns and residents to follow pristine infection control procedures. No slip-ups tolerated.

Half way through her rotation, Dr. S saw 2 patients, each with a serious infection caused by an uncommon ESBL (Extended Spectrum Beta Lactamase) resistant organism.

She made an extra effort to interview the patients and dig into their history and with great pride and concern approached her attending with her discovery. "Both patients had been cared for in the same outpatient surgery clinic - they are spreading this germ - we have to go and tell them right away."

Yes the attending agreed - we must both go now *and culture YOUR stethoscope*. Because the other common link between these patients is you - how do we know that it was not your stethoscope?

Dr. S had been cleaning her stethoscope religiously - she was sure it was not her - and was ready to prove it. So the culture was taken and a few days later - no ESBL was found - feeling vindicated - she showed the results to the attending. The stethoscope culture did not grow ESBL it grew MRSA.

Her attending smiled and asked - oh and is that better?

You know Dr. S told us - it is experiences like this that change you.



Sometimes the answer is before our very eyes.....

Every first of the month the Nasrudin would cross the border with thirty donkeys with two bails of straw on each. Each time the custom person would ask the Nasrudin's profession and the Nasrudin would reply, "I am an honest smuggler." So each time The Nasrudin, his donkeys and the bails of straw would be searched from top to toe. Each time the custom folk would not find anything. Next week the Nasrudin would return without his donkeys or bails of straw.

Years went by and the Nasrudin prospered in his smuggling profession to the extent that he retired. Many years later the custom person too had retired. As it happened one day the two former adversaries met in a country far from home.

The two hugged each other like old buddies and started talking. After a while the custom person asked the question which had been bugging him over the years, "Nasrudin, please let me know what were you smuggling all those years ago?" The Nasrudin thought for a few seconds and finally revealed his open secret, "Donkeys"

