What do you want to be when you grow up? Whenever I got this question as a child - my answer was “I want to become BATMAN” - a human using his training, cool gadgets and of course a super computer gets to to solve crime and the title of “World’s best DETECTIVE” why not? Only to realize, my childhood dreams were going to be hard to materialize - I decided I can still be the worlds best detective by being an internist

And as such, coming into my first year - I would wake up at 5 am and do MKSAP questions, sign up for the difficult/good learning cases at work, and stay up late on my calls to read up the latest evidence on uptodate just so I could impress my staff. The euphoria of being the one who gets the question right on medical jeopardy was only canceled out by the pain of having to deal with disposition issues. going with the whole batman analogy... lets just say that the disposition issues became the BANE of my existence

One such case I was involved with was that of a lady who had been to ER on 3 separate nights - vaginal bleed, stable hemoglobin so was sent home in the past awaiting a gynecology referral. This time she had hyponatremia due to dehydration and so ER wondered if she needed to be admitted - when asked do you wanna stay she said I can drink fluids at home, what I need is a gynaecology doctor. Why do I recall this case so well?  the patient here was my mom. PAUSE.

After 3 ER visits and a long wait, she did get seen by a gynaecologist. I remember being at the meeting when the gynecologists when she uttered the 5 words “your mom has endometrial cancer” The doctor was sympathetic delivering the news, she gave us time to ask our questions and then before the 15 minute follow up was up she said “I have referred you to a gyne onc clinic you will get a phone call with your appointment date and time. you don’t need to book a follow up with me again, also I will be away on vacation next few weeks” And just like that, she had done her job, something I had done a million times. Follow the protocol - give the diagnosis and referred her to the right authorities for treatment.

However, being on the other side, I realized what lacked here was a display of ownership  We weren't given a contact name/phone number. .Every hour that we waited glued in front of our phone, the anxiety only grew stronger.  And in a time when I want to be a son I was instead forced to be my mom’s doctor. Eventually I took matter in my own hands - I called staff that I knew at the hospitals downtown and they recommended I go to ER until we get seen by gyne onc And again we were back in ER - instead of asking for gyne this time we were asking for gyne onc. Luckily I was able to get her connected back in the system quickly and her treatment happened in a timely fashion from that point onwards.

This whole experience has made me realize the value of having a safety net and patient advocacy. In our fragmented healthcare system, while individual doctors were all amazing at following protocol, somehow my mom kept following through the cracks and her wait time kept creeping up - until we decided to take the matter in our own hands. As a doctor when I go around the wards now, while I focus on getting the right diagnosis and the right treatment, I also realize the value of doing the less glamour work - typing up a good discharge summary, taking the time to call the family doctor or specialists to get the referral/date/time right! At the end of the one of the more recent Batman movies when he is asked about his true identity he says "it is not who I am, but what I do that defines me" and by doing some of these more practical tasks related to patient care, I am hoping to redefine myself as more than just a detective to truly be a hero that my patients DESERVE and NEED.