

In praise of our health care system - 1/2

by BRIAN LOCKHART

It seems all you ever hear is complaints when it comes to the Health Care system in Ontario.

People hate the wait times. They hate the fact that they have to wait longer in the ER because they have a sore throat and the doctors are spending time with the guy in the next room who is suffering from severe chest pains.

They complain of a doctor shortage, and waiting for specialized procedures or surgery.

People complain a lot.

I thought this is a good time to express my own experience with Health Care in Ontario.

I had never been hospitalized, and I've always been healthy. Other than a couple of in and out trips to the emergency room for stitches due to work or sports related injuries, that was it. I've never required hospitalization or any real kind of medical care.

That all changed on August 22, of this year.

I was driving my motorcycle to a concert in a nearby town. It was a nice day for a ride and I wanted to arrive at 6:00 p.m., and spend an hour listening to the band and taking photographs.

I've always been a super careful rider. I ride at the posted speed limit and usually lower if there is no traffic. I place both feet on the ground at every stop sign, and keep an eye out for every other vehicle who may not see you. I always took the less travelled roads just to avoid traffic.

I was on a straight stretch of paved rural road - about as safe as it gets for a motorcycle - and cruising at a comfortable speed.

In a split second that ride went from a pleasurable outing to a near catastrophic event.

A coyote darted across the road directly in my path. Yes, a coyote of all things. It happened so fast I never even had a chance to touch the brakes.

I hit the coyote and the front wheel turned right - I torpedoed head first into the pavement at 60 kph.

It's hard to describe what that felt like. If I could put it into words, it would be something like **BLAMMO LIGHTS OUT!**

The minutes after the crash are a blur. I vaguely recall laying on the side of the road and seeing my motorcycle on its side a good distance away.

I knew I was seriously injured, and from that moment I was totally helpless. My jacket was shredded, my jeans torn, and even my shoelaces had been ripped off.

Cars pulled over and people stopped to help. I don't even recall being placed in the ambulance.

I was taken to the nearest local hospital in Alliston.

At this point I could have just been a bag of cement. I couldn't move, and was totally reliant on everything from those around me.

A doctor came in to speak to me. He told me they were going to stitch up the gash over my eye, then send me to the x-ray department.

I was put in a CatScan machine and they took images of my whole body ? I think ? I was still in a daze at this point.

A while later the doctor returned after viewing the images.

He apologized and told me they couldn't help me because the injuries were too severe. He said he was going to find a large hospital in Toronto that could take me.

?I'm sorry,? he said. ?We're a small hospital.?

I wasn't disappointed in the fact they couldn't help me, I understand it's a small hospital, I was more disappointed in the fact that being sent to a big city hospital meant my injuries may be worse than I even thought.

Very early the next morning, a nurse arrived at my room and said there was a paramedic team who had arrived to take me to Toronto. They loaded me into the ambulance for the ride.

The one paramedic sat down beside me. He may have been young but he certainly was experienced and knew broken bones and potholes don't go well together.

?We're going to do the best we can,? he said. ?But we can't do anything about bumps in the road.?

It was his way of warning me that this was going to be a rough ride - and it was.

I felt every bump ripple through my body and yelled out more than a few times when my broken bones bounced to the rhythm of the road.

Next week ? Arrival at the trauma centre.