

Lisa Kingston
8/10/10

Standing at the bedside of patients is a completely humbling experience. No matter how smart I am, or how prepared I feel, the questions and emotions that come from pain and illness are the ones that are the hardest to answer.

This summer, I met a forty five year old patient named Rob who could not speak because of a breathing tube that was in his throat. He had family surrounding him, but he was not able to be comforted. When I entered the room to meet him he was crying. He looked at me and mouthed the words, "Why can't God hear me?" He repeated the question over and over again, becoming more and more upset. He looked towards me for an answer but I had none. I began to cry along with him. I cried because I had no answer, and I cried for Rob. I said nothing while we held hands and cried together. Finally, I said to him, "I don't know why God can't hear you...what do we do now?"

I learned this summer that being a chaplain isn't all about comforting people or giving them hope. It is about challenging people to be in the state they are in, no matter how intolerable that feels. Chaplaincy is about asking the hard questions and discovering oneself based on the answers. Even though my answer to Rob was "I don't know," I learned more about people, God, and myself this summer than I ever have before. Although it was not an easy summer, I am grateful for this opportunity.