

24 Hours in Toledo

## THE TOLEDO HOSPITAL (1 A.M. TO 2 A.M.) A busy night in the emergency room

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Of course there's blood. It's a hospital.

Except, sometimes it gets where it isn't supposed to.

"You've got blood on your forehead," registered nurse Raquel Ruiz tells a nearby doctor. "And on your ear. And everywhere."

She starts dabbing it away, the blood that geysered from the arm of a patient. The doctor acts like it's no big deal and continues with his work.

It's around 1 a.m. in the Toledo Hospital emergency room — one of the largest in the state — and things are unusually busy, even by the hospital's standards.

People dot the waiting room, ignoring the blaring TV and trying to stave off sleep. Exam rooms are full. There's at least a two-hour wait.

"Tonight's definitely a busy night," says Ms. Ruiz. "Sometimes we'll have a slow period when we first come in. Sometimes we'll have a slow period at 5 a.m. It just depends. ... Tonight I think we'll be busy the whole time."

There are lots of reasons. Maybe because it's early on a Friday, not long after the end of "Thirsty Thursday" as it's known around here because it's a popular bar night for young adults.

Or maybe because last night was a full moon. Lots of ER personnel say that things get busier around these times.

When all else fails, blame the weather. It's raining and unseasonably warm, which means lots of flu bugs and other viruses that usually get stamped out with the cold are still around, making people miserable.

### MULTIMEDIA

[See and hear the activities at the Toledo Hospital ER from 1 a.m. to 2 a.m.](#)



Dorothy MacEacheron comforts her husband, Ray. He came to the Toledo Hospital Emergency room with chest pains and shortness of breath. (THE BLADE/ ALLAN DETRICH)

None of that explains why 93-year-old Ray MacEacheron is here. He's lying in a bed, cords slithering over his chest. He says he's had a heart attack, his second in the last year.

But the Sylvania man is feeling better now, next to his daughter Irene Layman and wife, 89-year-old Dorothy. It was scary for her when the chest pains and shortness of breath started more than five hours earlier and sent her scampering across the street to her daughter's nearby house for help. They almost needed a hospital trip for two when she tripped over the front step and fell in a puddle.

"We've had quite a wild evening," Dorothy said. "And my pants are still wet."

Next door is Jamie Bookenberger, clutching a cup of Tim Horton's coffee. He's here to be with his grandfather — and roommate — Donald, who fell while recovering from major heart surgery at a local rehabilitation facility.

Jamie, 27, moved in with the 82-year-old after his grandmother died, to help his grandfather and himself.

"I was making bad decisions," he said. "This has been a total turnaround."

Now they go out for coffee and friendly drives. Just earlier today, Jamie, who works at a diner, made him a burger and brought it in for him.

"I consider him my best friend now," Jamie said.

Other rooms are full of uncomfortable people, tired people, sick people suffering in silence behind closed doors or pulled curtains. They're bent over, waiting for treatment, for the pain to go away.

It's an orderly scene as nurses buzz around desks and computer terminals. No one runs around shouting orders and there are no patients clogging the halls.

Instead, it all takes place to the soundtrack of beeping heart monitors.

Bong. Bong. Bong.

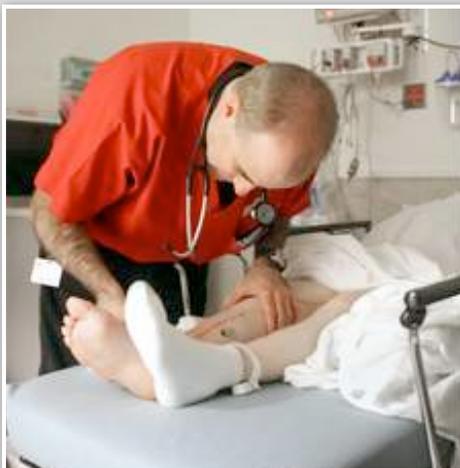
It's the heartbeat of the ER, but Dr. Rob Wood can't hear it anymore. It's just part of his surroundings.



Paramedics bring Donald Bookenberger into the Toledo Hospital emergency room. (THE BLADE/ALLAN DETRICH)

Clad in a red Ohio State shirt, Dr. Wood is one of only two doctors working the ER right now — half of what's usually around in the daytime. His plate is full, and the patients are piling up.

"It's sort of being like the only guy working at McDonald's," he says. "If it's a slow day, I can probably keep up. But McDonald's doesn't take reservations and neither do we, so when a lot of people come in, it's a longer wait for a table sometimes."



Dr. Robert Wood checks a patient's leg on a recent night in the Toledo Hospital emergency room. (THE BLADE/ALLAN DETRICH)

Some nights there are lulls, but not tonight. Even if there were periods of quiet, don't you dare say it.

"Don't say the Q-word," Ms. Ruiz says. "We don't say the Q-word."

Things are so busy the cafeteria, which usually closes at 3 a.m., has brought in sandwiches because no one can step away.

All of this is just fine with Dr. Wood. He doesn't mind working nights on a rotating schedule.

"I'm not much of a day person," he says.

His shift will end at 6 a.m., about the time that some of the patients in the waiting room will have to be getting ready to start work or school.

Brianna Ault is one of them, and she's not looking forward to it.

The 16-year-old from Rossford was rear-ended at a red light earlier in the evening and is experiencing some back pain. She's been in the ER since before midnight and is still waiting when 2 a.m. rolls around.

"I want to go to bed," she says. "I just want to go home."

She will, but not yet.

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