

Rush Hour

9 April 2015 Kelly Eng



Kelly Eng, Ed#478, February 2015

A tale of workplace adrenaline gone wild.

Let me tell you about the time I accidentally became an injecting drug user at work.

I was employed by a small advertising agency that did a lot of work for the pharmaceutical industry.

One product we looked after was EpiPen. For those who don't know, an EpiPen is a spring-loaded syringe of adrenaline that's used to treat people experiencing life-threatening allergic reactions.

The work storeroom was a treasure trove of pharmaceutical goodies that were stored for work purposes (safely and responsibly). One day, while I was fossicking about for highlighters and promotional jelly beans, I decided I wanted to know more about the EpiPen, including:

- a) what the needle looked like when it came out, and
- b) what the drug looked like coming out of the needle.

So, I took an EpiPen out of its box, pausing to admire the yellow packaging. Flinging the box to one side, I looked on in wonder at this saviour of the allergic. "Excalibur", I whispered, and then I pressed what I thought was the button. I had expected to see the needle spring forth away from my body. Instead I felt a sharp pain in my hand. As I looked down, blood spurted from the point

of entry.

I had injected myself with adrenaline.

And the dry-mouthed realisation that I had injected myself with adrenaline caused my adrenal glands to unleash torrents of, er, adrenaline.

Time stopped. My eyeballs bulged out of their sockets. I had murdered myself. In the work storeroom. I was going to die. I was too young to die! Too stupid to live, I'll grant that; but too young to die. Would Suzie, the graphic designer, have to administer CPR?! Would I be buried in my pink, panda-print pyjamas? Would there be curried egg sandwiches at my funeral? No tears, please, just flatulence.

My morbid reverie was shattered by the adrenaline hurtling through my hand. The cardiovascular system I'd so diligently cared for was about to deliver its own demise.

Well, this is it, I thought. It will short-circuit my heart. My small and pathetic life flashed before my eyes: tying my first shoelace, coming runner up in the under-10 'D' Grade doubles tennis finals with Barry...

Being a sometimes timid person, I decided it would be better not to tell my colleagues that I was dying. Nobody likes a drama queen, after all. Better they find me later, slumped and bloody over back copies of *Australian Doctor*, than have me disrupt their busy working day.

So I concentrated on sitting as quietly as I could – an impossible feat given I had the energy of a thousand Red Bulls coursing through my veins. I was ready to lift a tram. To take on Mike Tyson. To circle the globe a couple of times in search of rogue asteroids that needed a good whacking. To dust my snow dome collection.

After cursing myself for not having made adequate provision for Snodge (my soft toy penguin) in my will, I considered that it would be a heavy inconvenience for my colleagues to have to drag my lifeless body out of the storeroom.

My boss's desk was just outside so I ventured, "Um, hello, Doug. Just out of interest, and not that I've done it and please don't fire me if I *have* done it and die, but what happens if you accidentally inject yourself with an EpiPen?"

"Oh, possibly not much," he said.

"Is that an evidence-based answer?" I was unable to determine if my high-pitched, strangulated tone was a result of the EpiPen or my mounting hysteria. Whatever, it gave the game away to Doug.

"WHY?! HAVE YOU DONE IT?"

He jumped up and my other colleagues raced over towards the storeroom, where the whole story was told in a frightening crime scene. An unnaturally animated Kelly, a discarded EpiPen and blood pouring from my hand. David the copywriter pressed the needle down so nobody else could join my death cult while Max applied a bandaid to my puncture wound. Suzie stared in horror, unable to comprehend the stupidity of the situation.

The rest of the day was a blur of remarkably elevated productivity. I increased my typing speed to 4000 words per minute. Later, I did laps around the supermarket. That night I bench-pressed a personal best, fast-cooked slow-cooked beef cheeks and zoomed off to a comedy show where friends remarked on how the most commonplace comedic observations launched me into thigh-

slapping hysteria.

I didn't die that day, 10 years ago. Nor did I sleep for a week. I have, however, gone on to become the Occupational Health and Safety officer at my present workplace. I serve as stern guardian of my colleagues' wellbeing and uncompromising keeper of the storeroom key. Even the mildest paper cut can inspire a 10,000-word incident report and a four-week safety awareness campaign on the risks of paper handling.

» *Kelly Eng is a freelance writer who blogs about haunted houses, her bum and her imaginary dog, Dennis Wongbert, at www.kellyeng.net.*

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