

PATIENT: IMPOSSIBLE IMPOSSIBLE

In early June, just as the weather started to really turn hot here in Pennsylvania, I found a bat in my youngest daughter's bedroom. She and I had headed home from a family get-together earlier than the rest of the family, so that I could put her to bed. It was about 9 pm, and I was sitting in the rocking chair in her bedroom, nursing her peacefully, when all of a sudden I felt something wet hit my leg. I looked up, and there it was—flapping its wings wildly and taking off about the room.

My heart skipped a beat and I cursed loudly, and then I instinctively put my free hand over my daughter's head and ran out of the room with her. In that moment of panic, I did not close her bedroom door, and the bat flew into the hallway. I decided to run back into her bedroom, and I shut the door quickly behind us.

By some miracle, Melanie was oblivious to all of what had been going on, and she continued to nurse as if I hadn't ever moved from the rocking chair. Once she was asleep and safe in her crib, I went on a bat hunt. (I couldn't find it.) Everyone else was still at

the get-together, but I texted my husband, Tim, to let him know what had happened.

Hours later, after my other two daughters were in bed and my husband and I were brushing our teeth, the bat flew into our master bathroom. This time, Tim and I worked together. I shut the two doors that lead into the bathroom while he opened a window so that the bat would hopefully fly out. Then he and I slithered across the floor to the nearest door and made our escape to the bedroom.

We assumed that the bat flew out some time that night. But 2 nights later, as I was sitting in the rocking chair in my daughter's room, the bat circled the room once again. This time, I ran out and closed the door behind me. Tim opened the windows in that bedroom so that the bat would fly out. Even though Tim was sure the bat flew out almost immediately, Melanie slept in our bed that night as a precaution.

The next day, Tim found a small hole in one of the baseboards in Melanie's room that he assumed the bat fit through to get into the house.

I suggested we use something to plug the hole, and he found a splash ball that our kids like to play with in the bathtub; it fit perfectly. Since that time, the bat has not returned.

I was sure that getting the bat out of our house for good would be impossible. (Bats can use the Earth's magnetic field as a compass to guide them and can even find their way back to roost from hundreds of miles away.¹) But some quick thinking and teamwork helped my husband and me to solve the bat problem hopefully once and for all.

This month's cover focus doesn't deal with bats, but it does deal with challenging surgical situations and difficult patient personalities that seemed impossible to solve or please. Luckily, the ace surgeons participating in this cover focus persevered and learned some good lessons in the process. ■

1. Towie N. Big brown bats use magnetic field to navigate long distance. <https://www.nature.com/news/2006/061204/full/061204-9.html>. Accessed July 1, 2019.

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