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## A STUDENT NURSE SAVES A SUBWAY RIDER'S LIFE

March 2, 2010 -- Until a week ago Thursday, nursing student Vivian Tran had been wondering whatever happened to the man she had given CPR to on a subway platform in mid-November. She only knew him as "John," ... the man's speech was soft and slurred so she wasn't sure ... but through dogged research, Mike McLaughlin, a reporter for the New York Daily News, was able to track him down.

Piecing together bits of information, McLaughlin was able to get a complete name from EMS but nothing else. So he phoned all the John McDermotts in Brooklyn until he found the security guard for the Metropolitan Opera, who was on his way to work that fateful Saturday morning when Vivian Tran came to his rescue as he slumped on the subway platform. He was breathing but had no pulse, which meant his heart had stopped beating. Until the Daily News called, McDermott was not aware of Tran, whom he now calls his "angel."

A senior at Phillips Beth Israel School of Nursing (PBISN) in Manhattan, Tran was in Brooklyn's 36<sup>th</sup> Street subway station reviewing for an exam while waiting for her train when loud noise filtered through her headphones and she rushed towards the commotion. "I saw a crowd of people and two feet sticking out from behind a pole," she recalled. "A subway conductor who had witnessed the incident yelled, 'Does anyone know CPR?' At that very moment, I went into automatic mode and yelled back, 'I do! I know CPR!' and at the same time, I yelled for the conductor to call 911 immediately."

Three days earlier, the Phillips Beth Israel student participated in a "Mock Code" skills lab class that simulated a patient's cardiac arrest in a hospital and lessons learned were soon tested for real. The Mock Code program was designed by Irene Rempel, RN, while doing her clinical experience as a graduate student at Pace University's Leinhard School of Nursing under the supervision of PBISN Dean Janet Mackin, RN, EdD, who was her preceptor.

"A cardiac arrest can be an intimidating experience for a new nurse," said Professor Rempel, who is now on the faculty of Long Island College Hospital School of Nursing where she teaches Pharmacology and Foundations in Nursing. "By exposing students to the signs and symptoms of a potential code and the role and responsibility of individual responders I hope the experience gained during the workshop will give each student the confidence in the knowledge and skills they have learned."

"The skills lab is a positive 'no fail' environment, where students can come and practice the skills they are learning," said Asst. Professor Tina Heinz, an expert in critical care who oversees PBISN's Skill's Lab. Thirteen student nurses were in Vivian Tran's group.

As soon as she reached the unconscious man, she took his pulse with one hand and shook him with the other but got no response ... Initial measures failing, she asked the train operator to assist in opening up his clothing.

“As I was starting CPR, I confirmed that the conductor had called 911 with his radio and that help was on the way,” as the event unfolded very quickly for the alert future nurse. “I thought about what I had just learned a few days ago and everything came together and played out automatically. I did several firm compressions and saw his eyes start to open and roll back into correct position ... and he started to mumble. I stopped compressions and took his pulse ... it was weak and thready, but present, so I became hopeful for his outcome. I proceeded trying to further awaken him and check on his neuro status. I asked him if he knew where he was, the time, the place, etc. He mumbled his responses but I persisted with my questions. He wanted to get up and leave but I told him he was not yet in a condition to get up. I waited until he was oriented and explained to him what had happened.”

Tran continued to monitor his respiration and pulse until EMS arrived a few minutes later. She immediately reported the events and interventions that she used and his vitals from beginning to end. She stayed with them a few more minutes to answer questions, then picked up her bag and papers off the ground, and proceeded on her way to work.

For the rest of the day, she had an adrenaline high. “I walked away with a great feeling. I realized that all through the entire incident I felt calm and cool as a cucumber. I realized how all that education and training has paid off!” she said.

“One never quite knows what challenges our students and graduates will face in their professional lives. That is why at Phillips Beth Israel, our wonderful faculty is constantly implementing new teaching strategies to make sure that students are as prepared for as many eventualities as possible,” said Dean Mackin. “We are all so very proud of Vivian. Her critical thinking and CPR skills saved John McDermott’s life.”