

My most memorable patient

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January 29, 2007

Scholarship essay

Michigan League for Nursing

All of the experiences in our life influence who we are, and what we become. In a time when everyone is focused on themselves, I find myself focusing on everyone else. This is the reason I decided to pursue a career in nursing. Every nurse I know has always told me that there will be one patient that will touch your heart and you will always remember that person. I recently met my person, and she will forever be a part of me.

While doing a volunteer rotation at Mott's Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor I met a very fragile 16 year old girl. She was diagnosed at age nine with a brain tumor. Radiation treatment was performed to save her life, however the treatments left her mentally and physically restricted. The staff complained of how abusive she could be, and no one volunteered to care for her. The decision to take her as a patient changed my life.

As I came into the room she immediately knew I was there. Here is this 70 pound girl all dressed in pink sparkles, fuzzy socks, ribbons and a pink wheel chair. It was obvious she was very upset and frustrated. After watching her for a moment I realized she was using sign language. Her father and caretaker had been teaching her to sign but none of the U of M staff knew how to sign to her. I kneeled next to her bed, look into her eyes and signed hello. Her smile spoke a thousand words. Even though her sign language was limited, she told me she was sad because she missed her father.

I continued to speak with her about her favorite colors, how she did not like physical therapy, and that she was thirsty. I also brought in the nursing staff so they could learn her sign language. Every nurse had written this young girl off as abusive and impossible to reason with, when she was just speaking a different language. For the rest of that day she was nothing but smiles and giggles. This young girl that I was supposed to care for ended up taking care of me. She taught me that not everyone speaks the same language and what meets the eye is not always

true. All it took was someone to pay attention to what she was trying to say through her physical actions. She did not want to hurt her staff; she just could not communicate with anyone.

When my shift was over I went in and she gave me a hug and signed “thank-you” and my eyes swelled with tears. I left that day with a sense of pride knowing that a 16 year old taught me more in one shift than I have learned all through nursing school. That day I made a promise to myself to never write off any patient because they are difficult. Instead I will try to learn their language and give them the best care possible.