

## My First Patient

For Grand Valley State University's nursing program part of our requirement is to partake in their Longitudinal Elder Initiative (LEI) program. During our first semester of nursing school we are assigned an elderly client in the community and every semester until we graduate, which is five semesters at GVSU, we have a certain number of visits to do. Each visit we have different assessments to complete pertaining to what we are doing at the time in nursing school. I first met my client June of 2010 and I never expected that she would have such an impact on my life and my growth as a nurse.

When we first met I found she was really nice, had a great sense of humor (that is hard to appreciate when nervous), and as luck would have it a retired nurse. Over the past eight months our relationship has grown. She trusts me and is comfortable discussing private matters that she has no one else to discuss with (or is too embarrassed to talk about). I almost always end up staying longer on my visits than I anticipated, just talking. We talk about nursing school and her experiences working in the ICU. We also talk a lot about the differences between how things are done now in the nursing profession compared to when she was a nurse. We have both learned a lot from each other and have watched each other grow.

Last semester I was to construct my first care plan for her and implement it. She has been struggling with obesity and not being able to exercise or do as many activities as she used to, so together we focused on improving her nutrition and making an exercise plan. When I went back to see her after the holidays, over the month and a half later, I noticed a change immediately. She had been on a new depression medication for a month and it had changed her life drastically. She was finally finishing all the projects she had

started, going out with her friends more, and she had lost six pounds! When we sat down to talk that day she thanked me. She said that even though the medication gave her the extra push to be more active, her weight loss would not have been possible without my teaching on nutrition/exercise and my continuing support.

We start nursing school with the intention to help others in their time of need. To be a part of her life at this time, to share in the excitement of her weight loss, and to watch her take what I have taught her to obtain her goal is an unexplainable feeling. Together we facilitate each other's growth and its relationships like this that make the profession of nursing so valuable. This is why nurses become nurses and this experience has reinforced by career choice. When I started this program I never expected acquire a teacher, a mentor, a friend, and a fan.