

As a sophomore in U of M's nursing program, I have not had a lot of clinical experience. However, despite only have completed one clinical rotation, I have had a patient who has been permanently ingrained in my memory. This patient was a 46 year old woman with stomach cancer. She had undergone surgery a few days prior and was still in great pain. I will never forget her tears and cries as I assisted the doctors in changing her dressing for the wound vac. I offered her my hand to squeeze as she tried to deal with the pain, while her husband looked on. The look on his face said it all. As he looked as his wife writhing in pain, he could not do anything to help her. All he could do was stand off to the side and try to deal with the pain of a loved one suffering alone. Not one of the doctors addressed him as they did their work. They failed to acknowledge the fact that illness does not just affect the patient, but the patient's family and friends as well. The concept of illness is multidimensional and can affect all aspects of the person and their relationships. This concept will shape the way I conduct my future nursing practice.

Later on that day, I was working with other student nurses and a nurse technician to transfer this same patient from a stretcher to her bed. The room was very small and crowded, so it was difficult to find a good way to position the bed and the stretcher for an easy transfer. The patient also had a feeding tube, a Foley catheter, and IVs that complicated the process. It took us quite a bit of time trying to shift her just right so that none of these would get pulled out. The process involved some tugging and additional pain for the patient. However, during the entire process, she did not complain once. She was in pain and dealing with being pulled all over, yet she was so patient with us.

Finally, once we had gotten her into her bed, I raised the head of the bed for her. I helped cover her up so that she was warm and comfortable. Before I left the room, I asked the patient if there was anything else I could do for her or anything that she needed. She responded to me saying, "You have done so much for me already. Thank you." I was amazed by her response. She still was thankful for everything I had done for her in spite of all that she had been through that day. This experience with this patient has taught me that even the smallest gestures of kindness can have a profound effect on a person. It has taught me that compassion makes such a difference in the patient's experience in the hospital. It has taught me that there is much more to nursing than simply giving medications and performing medical procedures. Nursing involves a therapeutic relationship that necessitates not only physical care, but emotional and spiritual as well. Although I have not had much experience in the hospital setting, I have learned that nursing is much more than a profession, it is a vocation. I will never forget the lessons learned during my clinical experiences and will use them as a guide for future practice.