

Dear Friend:

It's not uncommon for me to hear laughter coming from my patients' rooms as I walk down the hallway, and find that it is "standing room only" when I enter.

Or to discover children curled up on the bed and the patient quietly reading to them.

**And I wish I could get to know my patients more.**

I wonder what their life is like outside the hospital's walls. Are they tired of picking up off the floor their children's dirty clothes, like I am? Or how did their spouse surprise them on their last wedding anniversary?

But, the reason I get to meet my patients is because they need Palliative Care.

Because no matter how technologically-advanced the hospital medical equipment, regardless of how amazingly skilled our doctors & nurses are, death is an important and inevitable part of life.

*This letter may be hard to read, but please don't stop.*

The Ajax Pickering Hospital is here for you, your family, loved ones and friends from the start of life to the end.

And your thoughtful donation today will help fund more life-changing equipment that our doctors & nurses will use every day to care for their patients - and their families - regardless of if they are getting them back to enjoying life or saying their final goodbye.

I know that when we usually talk about the hospital, we focus on what we do to make people better, how we get them back to their normal life or even welcome a new family member into the world.

But regardless of why you are under our roof, you always deserve compassionate, dignified and respectful care at Ajax Pickering Hospital.

**And you can help me do that.**

My aim is to try and make someone's last moments the best experience possible.

Sounds strange, doesn't it?!

*This may hit close to home, but please don't stop reading.*

Just like all my colleagues, I work hard to provide compassionate, dignified and respectful care; I'm just managing my patients' symptoms and pain rather than trying to cure them.

A lot of times, no matter their age, the one thing that my patients want is to spend more time with their families.

And the families, in turn, want to spend as much time with their loved one as they can before they leave them.

**“For life and death are one, even as the river and sea are one.”**

It is not unusual that during the day, someone has pulled the room's recliner chair as close to the bed as they can so that they can comfortably hold hands with their loved one. And at night, that same recliner chair is pulled out into a bed as another family member takes the “night shift”.

No one ever wants their loved one to be alone in the hospital.

I can't tell anyone how long they have together, but I can help my patients manage their pain so that every time their family visits, they all have quality time together and don't remember any grimaces of pain.

**And your donation today could help give these same peaceful experiences to more patients and their families.**

Because your gift could help fund more IV pain pumps that are so important at the hospital, and especially in Palliative Care. The staff program them to provide scheduled infusions of pain-relief medicine, but they can also be patient-operated to give extra “boosts” of relief when the patient needs it.

Or maybe your donation will fund more recliner chairs so that other family members can be comfortable while they remain close to their loved ones.

A lot of my patients pass away surrounded by spouses, children, family or friends.

And I try my best to make sure they aren't in any pain.

And I know that I have done my job well when, in the future, the family think back to those final days with their loved one and remember them with calmness and without stress.

But I have also held the hand of many patients who are alone, either because they have no family or their family are just too far away to come to their bedside.

**It is an honour & a privilege to be with someone as they pass. You are a witness to the final important moment of their life.**

That is why we are launching the “No One Dies Alone” program at Ajax Pickering Hospital.

And it does exactly as it says.

Trained volunteers will spend time with Palliative Care patients over their last days and hours. Talking with them and providing calmness if they are conscious, or being a comforting presence if they aren't. And we know that easing a patient's distress and agitation can help reduce the need for medical intervention or the use of powerful medications.

These volunteers will hold someone's hand in place of their loved ones; they will hold the iPad so that far-away family members can say their goodbyes; they will connect with the unit staff if they think the patient is experiencing pain or discomfort; they will make sure the patient knows that they are important and not forgotten.

**No one is born alone,  
and no one should die  
alone.**

So along with IV pumps and recliner chairs, your donation today could be funding items for Comfort Carts that families or the volunteers will make valuable use of. No item is “insignificant” if it can make a world of difference to someone during such a emotional time, like:

- coffee machine, kettle & snacks
- iPads (both for FaceTiming & to play music)
- colouring pages & crayons
- toiletries
- tissues
- religious & spiritual items
- adult distraction puzzles & games
- children's books related to death & grief

And thanks to some talented members in our own community, we already have

beautifully knitted blankets to help bring some cheer into the patient's room, which the family can also take home with them.

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**No matter why you are under our roof, you always deserve compassionate, dignified and respectful care at Ajax Pickering Hospital. And you can help me do that.**

Yours Sincerely



Caitlin Tumey, RN, MN, CON(C)  
Clinical Nurse Specialist, Palliative Care  
Ajax Pickering Hospital

PS Your thoughtful donation will help fund more life-changing - and even life-saving - equipment so our doctors & nurses can provide the best care, close to home to all our patients, from the start of life to the end.

PPS - For all my patients, I whisper a silent prayer of thanksgiving for having known them, and for having been part of their last important moments. It is always an honour & a privilege to care for them.