

VA Patient Narrative

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Mr. X is the perfect patient. He is obedient to a fault; committed to the traditional role that the doctor is always right. He is quick to follow orders and last to complain.

I met Mr. X for what we thought would be an overnight observation for a blood transfusion. What unfolded was a series of difficult diagnoses, prognoses and decisions. But throughout this time, Mr. X remained passively persistent. Similar to how he shepherded his life. As a child, he worked diligently to provide extra money to his single mother raising 4 kids. As an adult entrepreneur, he dedicated his life and work to serve others through dry walling. His goal was to provide a nice life for his family. He built a community around his work until asbestos poisoning forced him to retire.

Throughout Mr. X's life, he has been plagued by a series of illnesses. One would never know. Even in his times of suffering, he selflessly offers help. Teeming with a gentle innocence and genuineness upon every offering. After his blood transfusion, a biopsy showed that his colon cancer had returned, this time spreading throughout his abdomen. Set to start palliative chemotherapy, his course was halted due to a bowel obstruction, likely caused by the cancer. Left with few options, and a partially functioning single kidney, we spent the past few days over discussing medical dogma with Mr. X. With every new medical stressor we threw at him, he maintained a thoughtful and patient stillness; never quick to judge or blame for his illnesses, or for the lack of patient centered, simplistic discussions.

The last few days of his life were peppered with uncovering his true joys. Gambling, Las Vegas, Ihop, eating, love, and prayer. But to witness this man pour over pride for his kids is one of my true joys. As a father of 6, his kids and grandkids are his true happiness. If they feel even 1/8th of the love he has for them, they would never feel lonely. He was the rock of his family; always focused on carrying on his family.

The last conversation I had with Mr. X, he left me with simple yet profound advice, per usual. He said "It's a Friday night; time to put on your dancing shoes." So in celebration of his life, we will dance.