Transformation of a Reluctant Patient to a Proactive Health Advocate

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ABSTRACT

‘Transformation of a reluctant patient to a proactive health advocate’ is the story of the gradual makeover of a proud and isolated person diagnosed with ovarian cancer fighting her own lonely battle to a positive, upbeat, proactive health advocate passionately involved in helping other patients, their doctors and the community as a whole fight this war. The story gives us a lot of insight into the ‘human face’ of ovarian cancer and is a good resource material for a medical humanities module.

Keywords: Cancer Survivor, Health Advocacy, Healthcare, Medical Humanities, Patient Empowerment

TRANSFORMATION OF A RELUCTANT PATIENT

Any narrative by a patient or her doctor may be a way of getting rid of the unpleasant experience and serves as a catharsis. Or it may be a way of connecting back to others from the isolation of illness. As caregivers we get new insight into the patients’ perspective of seeing things, interpreting our actions and our words. (Deborah & Kasman, 2004) As we connect we develop a better relationship with our patients. The narrative serves as completing the healing for the patient as well as moulding us into better healers (Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999). Narratives can be used as a very good resource material for a medical humanities module to sensitise students to some very important issues like professionalism, empathy, communication skills, ethics and importance of integrative medicine (Brett-MacLean, 2007).

The journey described is extra-ordinary, the transformation dramatic and forces one to marvel at the indomitable human spirit and endeavour even in the face of adversity and against all odds.

The author has, in a very natural, non-judgemental and sensitive manner drawn our attention to certain aspects of health care delivery, affordability and research. I would like to highlight and raise certain issues for us to reflect upon and make us more compassionate human beings and better role models for our students.

When her story starts she is a self sufficient fifty nine year old, divorced lady living alone and proud of it! She is sceptical and disillusioned of modern/western medicine because of her past encounters and is at risk of neglecting herself and