

Transfer of Care

Category: Paperwork

written by Joe Amaral | January 2, 2018

We take a man home on hospice from the hospital: end stage cancer, metastatic. His Power of Attorney requested one last pain shot of Dilaudid. We cinch belongings into bags, gather discharge papers and old flowers in vases. He groans being moved from cot to gurney, and again over the bumpy roads. It's his final ride; we are his transporters.

On the ambulance we get callous doing these trips too many times, lost in charting face sheets and MD orders- numbness our mask, avoiding eye contact so as not to absorb their suffering. Perfunctory and nonchalant, we have to check ourselves.

Remember our common humanity.

I touch his outstretched fingers. The man is groggy but still has his wits. I ask him if his family is waiting.

All of them, he sighs.

Good an ending as any. I nod silently, and then I return to looking busy, opening a folder and reading about his medical history.

We arrive, pausing outside to let him feel some wind, sun and fresh air. Family is everywhere. We sidestep tears to not get wet, moving him to the living room bed with the koi pond view as we transfer care to his nurse.

As the patient's wife reads the privacy form on my tablet, my partner jokes: It's like signing for a package!

Pausing, she looks at him and replies:

I believe it's a bit more serious than that.

Did you think what you said was funny?

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