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St. Cloud Hospital

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Dying with dignity

One woman’s role as caregiver

A
fter Lois Ziemer’s third funeral of a loved one lost to cancer, she wept in the arms of her pastor. He told her, “This grief is the price you pay for love.” Few know the wisdom behind those words better than Lois, who was the primary caregiver for her mother, her brother and her aunt during their final days. All three died of cancer, all within a little more than five years.

Through her experiences, Lois, who is a patient care extender in St. Cloud Hospital’s Emergency Trauma Center, has gained a special kind of insight into the dying process. She wants to share her story in the hopes that other families dealing with loss can learn from her words.

“Each person close to you that dies is a whole different experience,” she said. “I don’t know if you can really prepare. What you do is, you hope for no suffering, you hope for a death with dignity.”

Dying with dignity has become the focus of debate in many parts of the United States, and in many health care organizations as well. Physician-assisted suicide laws in Michigan and Oregon are the subject of controversy, prompting Catholic health organizations like St. Cloud Hospital to explore the issues they raise.

At the heart of these legal battles lie essential questions of self-determination and self-preservation: Do individuals have the right to decide their own fate, even if they wish to die? What role should family and physicians play in the dying process? How much suffering must a person in pain endure?

Through caring for her dying loved ones, Lois Ziemer has asked herself all of these questions. The answers are not easy, nor complete. “It’s very difficult,” she said. “You know they are in so much pain, but you can’t think of letting go.” And yet Lois did let go — three times. Each one tells a different story, each with lessons to share.

The most important, Lois said, is that she hasn’t done anything extraordinary. “Anyone can do this,” she said. “All it takes is love and commitment, and support from those around you.”

Lois’ mother

In October 1989, Lois learned that her 69-year-old mother was dying, and she prepared her own home for her mother to share. The gesture, she said, came naturally as a gift of love. “I could never repay her for all she had done for me, and this would be the last gift I could give her,” she said. “That’s what was important.”

Because Lois’ work schedule required her to be away from home some nights, other family members stepped in to assist with caregiving. Her mother also used the services of St. Cloud Hospital’s Hospice Program, which offers special support to terminal individuals in the last year of life.

“I don’t know how I would have cared for her without them,” Lois said of the support from her family and Hospice. “They could never be paid what their value is.”

The health of Lois’ mother deteriorated rapidly in only a
Central Minnesota native named Melrose Hospital administrator

Julia Westendorf was named Melrose Hospital administrator Monday. She previously held the position for more than 36 years of leadership at Melrose Hospital. Her commitment and restabilize the hospital's management and the associated Pine Villa Nursing Home. A three-year agreement was reached in an effort to bring former Melrose Hospital Administrator Joan back to Central Minnesota and wishing her a successful career.

Luis&#39; brother

Two days after Luis was treated, her brother Bill was scheduled for surgery to remove his colon. He recovered rapidly, and was home by Christmas. As the anniversary of their mother's death approached, Lois grew even more concerned about Bill. He was becoming more and more incontinent, and Lois knew he was never going to get better. "That's why Dorothy's illness hit Luis so hard," she said.

"It's going to be a long, long struggle," Lois said.

Lois had returned.

"That's when it finally sunk in," Lois said.

Lois learned her first hard lesson as a caregiver. "I knew," Lois said. "I knew it wouldn't be good news." Lois was the one who would just ask for the medicine if she wasn't in pain. Lois had returned.

"That's what he wanted, but he really didn't know," Lois said. "That was really a piece that was missing.

"Luis was very grateful to St. Cloud Hospital and to the medical staff who worked with their St. Cloud peers to learn about the medical treatment of chronic and acute kidney failure using dialysis machines. This specialized training was provided by Dr. Tom Leitner, and Jim Lundgren, and nurses Cathy Inderbitz and Linda Landhey, all of St. Cloud. It is hoped that this training will allow the Hondurans to return to home to open the first dialysis unit in La Ceiba, Honduras, this summer.

The project began about six months after when the board of directors for International Health Services (IHS), Minnesota-based nonprofit medical relief organization, received a donation of four dialysis machines from Miller-Dawn health in Duluth, Miss. Teji Tafer, director of the international Medical unit at St. Cloud Hospital, and Dr. Fred Estrada, coordinator of St. Cloud's International Medicine, are members of the IHS board and have directed the project.

Central Minnesota native named Melrose Hospital administrator

Bill was scheduled for surgery to reconnect his colon with his small intestine. He had to undergo chemotherapy on his liver. He was very grateful to St. Cloud Hospital and to the medical staff who worked with their St. Cloud peers to learn about the medical treatment of chronic and acute kidney failure using dialysis machines. This specialized training was provided by Dr. Tom Leitner, and Jim Lundgren, and nurses Cathy Inderbitz and Linda Landhey, all of St. Cloud. It is hoped that this training will allow the Hondurans to return to home to open the first dialysis unit in La Ceiba, Honduras, this summer.

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Educating across cultures

Hondurans travel to St. Cloud for dialysis training

It is an effort to provide much-needed medical care for people in their own country, a surgeon, internist, registered nurse and technician from Honduras recently visited St. Cloud for training in St. Cloud's Hospital's Dialysis Unit.

During their stay, these medical professionals worked with their St. Cloud peers to learn about the medical treatment of chronic and acute kidney failure using dialysis machines. This specialized training was provided by Dr. Tom Leitner, and Jim Lundgren, and nurses Cathy Inderbitz and Linda Landhey, all of St. Cloud. It is hoped that this training will allow the Hondurans to return to home to open the first dialysis unit in La Ceiba, Honduras, this summer.

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Psychiatric care option offered

St. Cloud Hospital is offering a new psychiatric program that provides another level of care between inpatient psychiatric care and outpatient services. The new program comes online from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, with patients typically participating for six months.

Gerry Dungan, a social worker in St. Cloud Hospital's Mental Health Unit, said the program came about because of nationwide changes in the way mental health services are delivered. "Many of the people that used to be admitted for inpatient care are now being seen as outpatients," he said. "But some people need a little more structure than an outpatient program typically provides. We wanted to offer this program as part of a continuum of care."

In the Partial Hospitalization program, trained treatment teams observe and assist patients during a wide range of structured activities, educational groups and psychosocial groups. Topics include stress management, communication skills, coping strategies, anger issues, grief and loss, and self esteem.

Patients participate in the program through referrals from outpatient therapists, inpatient programs, primary care or other professionals. For more information about the program, contact Gerry Dungan at (612) 656-7019.
Health care goes home

St. Cloud's Home Care program sees rapid growth

After the stroke, Dutch, 74, stayed at St. Cloud Hospital for three weeks and then was transferred to Good Shepherd Lutheran Home, where he continued his therapy. With strong determination and a positive attitude, Dutch progressed well enough to go home by September with the help of home care services.

For the past seven years, Dutch has worked with physical and occupational therapists twice a week in his home. A home health aide also visited to assist him with showering and other personal care. In April, Dutch reached one of his many recovery goals— he took a shower without assistance for the first time since his stroke.

"I've accomplished another thing on my list," said Dutch. "That's the first thing he told his therapist at the hospital was the first thing. He progressed enough to begin outpatient coordination in the 31,656 living in the media in presenting this information to the public. It will come at a time when the government are demanding more accountability of all health care organizations. St. Cloud Hospital and other home care agencies are currently working with the Minnesota Home Care Association and the Department of Human Services to improve medical assistance rates. Medical care is one of the fastest growing segments of the health care industry. St. Cloud Hospital's Home Care program grew 15 percent from 1990 to 1994. The number of patients we see isn't increasing as fast as the number of visits for each patient," said Kathy Murphy, director of St. Cloud Hospital's Home Care Services.

"It's quite a science getting the human body back into its normal activity," said Schaefer's wife, Eleanor. Because of the special needs of patients like Dutch, home care is one of the fastest growing segments of the health care industry. St. Cloud Hospital's Home Care program grew 15 percent from 1990 to 1994. The number of patients we see isn't increasing as fast as the number of visits for each patient," said Kathy Murphy, director of St. Cloud Hospital's Home Care Services.

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Denmark guests learn about relapse program

Although Mary Czech, a Certified Relapse Prevention Specialist for Recovery Plus, admits to feeling a little apprehensive about those chemical dependency professionals from Denmark for a week, they now wishes they could have stayed longer.

Arne Jakobsen, Bodil Mikkelsen and Inger Mary Czech understood their feelings. She had two years in treatment and had been working with the program for one year. "We try to deal with all aspects of pain and when someone is in pain they can get the help they need," said Weisbrich.

For more information about the Relapse Prevention Program, call Mary Czech at (651) 255-5613 or 1-800-743-HELP.

Night entrance ensures safety

If you require emergency care after 10 p.m., come to St. Cloud Hospital's Emergency Trauma Center. But, if you're visiting the hospital after 10 p.m. for any other reason, you'll need to use a special entrance.

To increase safety and security for patients and employees during the night, all public entrances to the hospital are now locked from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. Patients arriving at the hospital after 10 p.m. will continue to be admitted through the Emergency Trauma Center (ETC). All other night-time visitors need to enter through Finsen B. This entrance is connected to a security system and monitored by telecommunications staff. Visitors are asked to identify themselves and their reason for entrance.

"We certainly don't want this change to discourage family members from being with their loved ones during the night," said Bill Becker, Safety and Security Coordinator. "But we do want them to know they are safe and secure inside the hospital."

As an added security measure, the ETC has its own, separate entry that does not allow public access to the rest of the hospital.
Each apartment is 540 square feet and has a bedroom, living room, bath, and full kitchen and dining area. Other features of the building include a coffee shop, hobby/community room, beauty shop, laundry and an emergency call system. Benet Place also will be a congregate dining site for the Benet Place apartment tenants.

For more information, contact Mary Jean Schlegel at (612) 252-0010, extension 209.

Benet Place open house scheduled

The landscape of southeast St. Cloud is taking on a new look with the addition of Benet Place, senior apartments with supportive services.

You’re invited to view the new building during an open house from 2 to 7 p.m. on July 27. Benet Place is located on the southwest corner of 15th Avenue Southeast and Minnesota Boulevard.

Benet Place will have 39 one-bedroom apartments for individuals age 62 and older who meet the income guidelines of $13,800 for a single person and $15,750 for a couple.

Here are a few general tips for better sleep and sharper thinking.

1. Use your bedroom only for pleasant and relaxing activity.
2. Never stay in bed when you are unable to sleep. Get up and do relaxing or boring things until you are sleepy.
3. Maintain regular and adequate (7-8) sleeping hours. Get up at the same time each day and do not lie in bed trying to make up for “lost” sleep.
4. Don’t nap during the daytime. Day or evening naps reduce nighttime sleepiness.
5. Avoid taking any stimulants before bedtime, including coffee, tea, alcohol, nicotine, diet drinks containing caffeine, medications for relief of menstrual pain, and cold/flu medications.
6. Establish a daily routine that includes exercise, and maintain it.
7. Avoid eating heavy meals prior to bedtime, and avoid going to bed hungry.
8. When you approach bedtime, be as relaxed as possible. Establish a routine transition period to prepare for bedtime, and maintain the routine daily.

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