

A mother through the eyes of her daughter... a nurse



I have spent my career caring for loved ones. I've held hands, offered reassurance, wiped away tears and advocated for patients when they were at their most vulnerable. I've seen illness, fear, grief and recovery. I thought I understood what it meant to be a relative...

Then my mum became the patient. Suddenly, I wasn't the nurse. I was the daughter.

The daughter watching every expression on my mum's face.

The daughter listening for changes in her voice.

The daughter lying awake at night worrying.

The daughter trying to be strong whilst feeling completely helpless.

As nurses, we spend our lives looking after others. We treat every patient as someone's mum, dad, husband, wife, son or daughter. But, when it is your own loved one lying in that bed...

... everything changes.

I saw my mum differently.

Not as a patient. Not as a diagnosis. Not as a bed number.

I saw the woman who raised me. The woman who picked me up when I fell.

The woman who taught me kindness, resilience and strength. The woman who has always been my safe place, and...

... seeing her vulnerable broke my heart.

What also broke my heart was looking around and seeing so many others just like her.

*Patients cared for in corridors.
Patients waiting for beds.
Patients who looked frightened,
exhausted and unwell.*

Each one loved by somebody. Each one important to somebody. Each one somebody's mum.

As a nurse, I understood why.

As a daughter, I struggled to accept it.

I watched nurses and healthcare assistants work tirelessly under immense pressure. I saw compassion in every interaction despite the chaos around them.

I saw professionals doing their absolute best in circumstances that should never have become normal.

There was no lack of care. There was no lack of dedication. There was simply too much need and not enough capacity... and that is what stayed with me.

Not anger.

Not blame.

Just sadness. Sadness that vulnerable people are spending hours in corridors. Sadness that families sit beside loved ones feeling powerless. Sadness that healthcare staff carry so much responsibility whilst working in conditions that challenge them every single day.



This experience reminded me of something I thought I already knew.

Every patient is someone's whole world.

Every patient is loved.

Every patient has a story.

My mum was one of those patients.

And... for a little while... I stopped seeing healthcare through the eyes of a nurse.

I saw it through the eyes of a daughter.

I don't think I will ever see it quite the same way again.

There were moments during Mum's admission that I found myself slipping back

into being a nurse, not because I wanted to, but because it felt impossible not to.

I helped make her bed. I helped wash and dress her. I fed her when she was too weak to manage. I fetched drinks, adjusted pillows and tried to make her as comfortable as possible.

None of this was because staff didn't care. Far from it. Every nurse, healthcare

assistant and medic I encountered was kind, compassionate and working relentlessly. The problem was that there simply weren't enough hands for the number of patients needing care.

What I wasn't prepared for was how much I would notice everyone else.

The lady reaching for her water but unable to get to it.

The lady struggling to find something on her table.

The confused patient looking around for someone to help.

Instinctively, I found myself helping them too.

Passing a drink. Moving a table closer. Picking up something that had fallen to the floor.

Tiny acts that took seconds but seemed to make such a difference.

As a humanitarian its natural. As a nurse, it felt normal to do what I was doing. As a daughter, it felt heartbreaking.

Because... I kept thinking the same thing...



what happens to these patients when their family isn't there?

What happens to the patient whose daughter lives hours away?

Or whose husband is too frail to visit? Or who has nobody at all?

Sitting beside Mum, I realised how much families quietly do behind the scenes. We don't just visit. We reassure, encourage, feed, comfort, advocate and help maintain dignity, but...

... but families should be there to spend time with their loved ones, not because they are worried that basic needs might go unmet.

The experience left me with immense admiration for the nursing staff looking after mum, but also a profound sadness for what has become normal.

Because ... nobody should be lying on a hospital bed in a corridor ...

... and...

... no daughter should leave, wondering whether her mum would have managed without her being there...

The identity of the author has been withheld...
