Compassion in action

Nursing student Poppy Butler learned how going the extra mile can make a real difference to a patient’s quality of life.

A 94-year-old patient came into clinic by himself for a routine appointment. It was immediately apparent that he was struggling with his personal hygiene – he had a strong odour and his clothes were soiled.

He was in a wheelchair and the team at the clinic, where I was on placement, inquired whether he needed help to use the toilet, which he accepted gratefully.

While assisting him, we noticed blisters and ulcers covering his calves and feet. It was also clear that his clothes were not only unclean, but sodden with urine and fluid weeping from his wounds.

When we offered him a quick wash before his appointment he was hesitant, saying he didn’t want to bother us. But after talking to him about his physical condition and reassuring him, he accepted our help.

We washed him and found him a new tracksuit top and bottoms and some new slippers. He was so grateful, and the positive change in his attitude was obvious.

The patient’s condition was assessed and his wounds were dressed. After further conversation he started to open up, accepting some lunch and a cup of tea. I opened his sandwich and crisps for him and he began to eat like he hadn’t eaten for days.

The following afternoon we received the wonderful news that, due to our interventions, he had received a full care package. He had asked that the following message be passed on to us: ‘Thank you to all the lovely nurses that looked after me. I am so grateful that someone is now showing me some TLC.

When the patient’s GP made some inquiries, it was found that he had previously refused offers of help from health professionals, family and friends.

Extra commitment

I found it difficult to accept that he had reached this situation and poor state of health. All it took was a little extra commitment and understanding before he agreed to accept help.

This experience showed me the importance of patient-centred care. It was so rewarding to hear that we had made such a difference to this man’s life, and that he felt cared for.

The nurses worked efficiently as a team to support the patient’s needs, communicating with other departments to ensure he received the best care.

They showed courage in speaking up and displayed compassion and commitment to patient-centred care by going the extra mile to improve the patient’s quality of life.

This experience has shown me first-hand what a huge difference compassion in action can make to patients. It has reinforced my decision to become a nurse, inspiring me to do my utmost to provide the highest standard of patient care.

Poppy Butler
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