

Positive and Helpful Medical Staff:

The Other Side of Healthcare

By Denise Price Thomas

CANCER. That's a very scary word. I imagine that every family has a loved one and a close friend who has been dealt this horrid diagnosis. My family certainly has. Once that dreaded word is spoken, then what? Working in healthcare for 38+ years, it's still so very scary and foreign on the other side of healthcare.

When my Daddy was diagnosed, we had to step out of our local area, knowing who to call and more importantly, who NOT to call and enter into a brand new arena for us. Brand new places, parking decks, buildings attached with crossovers, floors that look just alike....you get the picture. We were scared. Fortunately we discovered people along the way who would reach out to us and help along the way.

I was reminded of this recently when a very dear friend of mine, a mentor in my life and in my healthcare profession received her "plan of treatment" and I had the privilege of taking her to the Levine Cancer Institute in Charlotte, NC. I believe in "making a party" out of any occasion, so that's just what we set out to do. Who knew we would discover many other healthcare professionals wanting to join our party?

Arriving for an early morning appointment, once again entering the parking decks, elevators, wondering which floor for lab work before treatment, people hurrying around to get to their appointments, very busy healthcare professionals rushing around....and guess what we found? Extremely caring professionals all around us! There were smiles, lots of eye contact, people reaching out to us as we stared at signs and room numbers, they walked over to us! "Good morning, I'm happy to help you find your way, where are you going?" They didn't even wait until we asked for help, they reached out to us. They saw we needed help. Arriving at the next desk, we were greeted by more smiles and caring eyes, confirming that we were in the right place. On several occasions, we were even walked to our destination, enjoying a great conversation along the way.

As my friend was to have labs drawn for an upcoming procedure, another great thing happened. She had talked with someone (jotting down her name) and she gave that information over to her nurse as she explained. After listening carefully the first time and hearing exactly what the patient was explaining, her nurse said, "Let me see what I can find out, I'll be right back." She returned with great news! "You aren't going to need to go to another floor, we are going to draw those labs right here" she said. What a relief this was for my very weak and tired friend.

What we discovered was an entire TEAM of healthcare professionals who truly care. The coffee shop team smiling as the coffee was served, chalking positive quotes on their walls and joking with their customers in a professional, but fun, way. We saw the

cleaning team in and out of areas, we spoke and they returned smiles and kind words. We witnessed nurses and other healthcare professionals, holding patients hands, delivering juices and crackers, they were a team, picking up where the other left off.

Eye contact is so important especially when you are sick or with a sick loved one. I've been in healthcare situations where employees would actually look in the opposite direction, afraid you were going to ask a question like, "How much longer will it be?" We did not find this to be the case at Levine Cancer Institute. They actually ANSWERED our questions BEFORE we had a chance to ASK them. I am once again reminded that the "things" that mean the most actually cost the least. Those are the "things" that are remembered.

I believe that a positive experience is not only dependent upon the patient getting better but the experience of knowing you are being cared for and about. To me CARE stands for Compassion And Respect for Everyone. We felt this CARE at Levine Cancer Institute in Charlotte, NC. ■

*"Training Wheels
in Heels"*



Denise Price Thomas



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