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# **Tender Loving Care: My Daily Dose with My Cancer Patients**

What made you go into Oncology? How are you coping, isn't it a depressing field? As a doctor in Oncology I get to be asked this question more often than I am asked for my name. Perhaps you too are also curious about my work. Well, let us delve into this 'dreaded' medical field. What made you go into Oncology? What a depressing field. How are you coping? As a doctor in Oncology, trying to answer these questions and more have

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*What a depressing field. How are you coping?* As a doctor in Oncology, trying to answer these questions and more have been my almost daily conversations with people explaining my love for Oncology and the daily miracles encountered.

Perhaps you are also curious about my work in Oncology. Well, I will tell you. I decided to specialize in Oncology to be a cancer therapy advocate and above all, to have an opportunity in my daily career to give a special “**TLC –Tender loving care**” to people who are at the verge

of losing hope due to the burden cancer has placed on them.

Each day in my work, I encounter how suffering and pain can be raised to a higher level for Christians; it is an opportunity to be another Christ smiling at them, especially for non-Christians who may not understand the meaning behind suffering. I ask myself, what would Our Lord's face have been if he were here? I try to present the same face and smile to my patients, to give them my daily TLC.

Cancer they say is a hopeless disease that shatters dreams. I say, cancer, even though a debilitating situation can be a time for being hopeful, optimistic and an opportunity for winning Heaven through purification if borne well.

Well, I have two experiences in my work to show how these daily doses of TLC have paid off...

Mrs. M. is a middle-aged woman with an advanced breast cancer with only a few days to live. She was desperate for a cure, sad at her situation. She was dependent and needed people to assist her in many things. This was her situation before she came into the hospital. I met her on one of the weekends I was on call. She was already in her last days.

During my conversation with her, I met a beautiful soul who was afraid to die. I talked to her about the Cross and hope for Heaven. I asked her if she wanted to see a priest. She said yes. I got in touch with the Chaplain of the hospital who came to see her. He prayed for her, and said he would come in the evening to baptize her because she had said she wanted to become a Catholic. Other engagement held him from coming back that same day. My weekend call was ending. I bade her farewell and asked her to pray for me and offer up her pains for her sins and mine. She

held my hand and promised she would do that. She told me she was afraid of death. I gave her my Rosary and encouraged her to seek solace in those powerful beads.

I came to work the following morning earlier than usual, to spend some time with her but met an empty bed. Mrs. M. left for Heaven earlier that morning. For some minutes, I was speechless...I was consoled by the deep desire she had for being baptized. This she had by desire after all. I know she is happy where she is, praying for me.

Another is Miss K, a young lady in her twenties who had a sarcoma, a type of malignancy that is usually resistant to chemotherapy and radiotherapy. I prayed to Montse Grases, who died from a similar illness and whose cause of canonization is ongoing to help me in my daily TLC with her. She was sad

at her diagnosis and not ready to talk to anyone, not even the doctors. She was withdrawn in her helpless stage. Miss K already had an advanced cancer. She too was dying.

I struck up a conversation with her, though difficult at the beginning. I asked her if she was Catholic. She said no but has been attending the Catholic Church for the past 6 months in a nearby parish without being baptized. Do you want to be Catholic? I asked, she said yes!!! Immediately, I contacted the Chaplain of the hospital through a friend that works in the same hospital with me. In less than 2 hours, my friend arrived with the priest. I was shocked to see them both within such a short time. Miss K affirmed her decision to be baptized. The priest asked me to be her sponsor.

I stood beside her during the whole ceremony answering the baptismal rites on her behalf. How happy I was when I heard these words: “Monica, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”. It was 30th of August, 3 days after the feast of St. Monica.

I felt like I was the one being made clean. I handed her my Rosary and encouraged her to pray as much as she could to the Blessed Virgin Mary. I could feel the joy in Miss K's face. She looked at me deeply, almost like saying... now I am saved for Heaven, for love... The mother, not understanding what had just happened, even though she was told, gave her daughter a warm embrace because she saw how peaceful she was. They were discharged home that day on request as they could not afford to continue paying the hospital bills.

Three days later, I called her mother to ask after Miss K's health and the sister who picked my call said: 'Doc, Miss K is resting now'. Monica died the day before, 2 days after her baptism.

With some sadness, I prayed for the repose of her soul and quickly entrusted my other patients to her intercession, and I won't stop doing so. I am more convinced every day of the power of the *TLC* on my patients. I am gaining more friends in Heaven each day. Now you agree with me that it's worthwhile, my daily *TLC*!

Dr. Genny Iboh