

IT WAS LAUREN-AND SHE JUST WANTED TO HELP. PUTTING THE HUMAN SIDE BACK INTO THE CRITICAL ILLNESS EXPERIENCE

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There's something diabolical about Critical Illness: the illness itself is so severe, that it strips its victim of **all** control. Regardless of the road to it - whether by slow illness with loss of function followed by sharp decline, or by sudden brutal Trauma, the inability to move, speak, think straight, and have dignity from clothing, has to be the most terrifying and dehumanizing of experiences.

But the diabolical nature of critical illness is not found there. It is found in the fact that it mandates a rapidity and Intensity of Care that by its very definition compounds the dehumanization. Even when done “nicely”, insertion of a chest tube, central line or urinary catheter, endotracheal suctioning, or any of the litany of other things we need to do are painful at the least, and injurious to the soul at the worst. It is found in that fact that Critical Illness forces very caring people to do things that injure and leave scars- when that is the farthest thing from what they wish for their charges. Finally, it is found in the very nature of the Critical Care Environment which isolates patients' families from them, at a time when exactly the opposite may be needed.

So how do we put the human connection back into Critical Care? Impossible? A huge task? Actually, it's a very small one; it's the Little Things that Matter...■