

A day in the life of a palliative medicine advanced trainee

Sep 30, 2018 | 1



| [a day in the life](#), [ontheblogs](#), [Palliative medicine](#)

Author:  Jessica Borbasi | Follow: 



Jessica Borbasi is an advance trainee in Palliative Medicine. After completing her basic physicians training she took a year off to work at a think tank, the Centre for Independent Studies. She is the author of "Life Before Death: improving palliative care for older Australians" and is passionate about educating doctors and the public about the true nature of palliative medicine particularly, its ability to improve living not just dying.

Editor: Abhijit Pal

He who has a *Why* to live for can bear almost any *How*

- Nietzsche

It is not easy to get bored when you hear about the secrets to a better life every day.

Palliative medicine is like being there at the end of a marathon. You get to hear about how great the beginning was, how tough the middle has been but best of all you get to ensure that the finish is what people hoped for.

Because at the end you can make the biggest difference - and you only have one chance to do so.

Peter was referred to us when he was in his 80s and by then he had end stage idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and was sick of doctors. He was tired of re-admission after re-admission, appointments galore, emergency presentations, x-rays and ABGs. His breathing wasn't getting any better in fact it was getting worse.

He wasn't scared of dying - I know because I asked him.

But palliative medicine isn't just about dying it's just as much about enabling people to live better.

Every day, I hear and see incredible relationships and heart-warming episodes that propel humanity into the divine, for example Edna, who looks as though she may fall over if you accidentally coughed on her, sits at home hooked up to her oxygen, as frail as a whisper. But as she sits on her chair all day long, with the front door open to caring neighbours (who recently popped in to make her tea and toast), she is knitting beanies for brain-cancer victims and tells me about her father who ran a grocery store in Neddown many moons ago

She almost cried with happiness when I told her I didn't think she needed to take those 20 tablets anymore. Peter on the other hand, whose breathlessness was beyond redemption was prescribed a handheld fan, a breathlessness plan and some morphine (these interventions like many in palliative care are often

As Doctors we should be asking less "What is the matter with you?" and more, "What matters to you?"

relationships and most doctors do not - **Don Berwick**

Practicing palliative medicine can take place in a palliative care unit (not just a hospice as 70 percent of patients are admitted for symptom management and are aged ,

A day in the life of a palliative medicine trainee is never dull, often people die, overwhelmingly people are grateful, you hear the most wonderful stories and most of all when you go home (usually on time) - you can't help thinking how lucky am I?

Non, je ne regrette rien

- Edith Piaf

Please note names have been changed to protect patients' privacy

References

1. Temel et al. (2010). Early palliative care for patients with metastatic non-small-cell lung cancer, NEJM, 363:733-42.

Related Blog

- [End of life care](#)
- [Between cure and palliation](#)

Related Podcasts

- [Palliative Care](#)
- [Communication and patient-centred care](#)

Tag : #advance care planning, #cardiology, #chronic disease, #end of life care, #General Practice, #Geriatric, #junior doctor, #medical career, #medical education, #oncology, #palliative care, #palliative care advanced trainee, #palliative medicine, #renal, #repirator