

## a simple shower

BY SUSAN RITCHIE

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Like many nurses, I went into nursing to care for others. In my clinical practice, I worked on an acute medicine unit, which included palliative care. Taking care of palliative patients was not always easy, but I found it to be most rewarding.

One time in particular, probably not even two years into my career, I was taking care of a woman in her 50s who was in the end stages of breast cancer. She desperately wanted a shower. I knew this was not going to be easy, but it was really important to her. As I gathered supplies, I realized this was no simple shower.

I wrapped up the subcutaneous set in her arm that was connected to the pump delivering her pain medication. I wrapped up the subcutaneous sets in her legs where she was getting other medications, and covered her saline lock. I put her on portable oxygen and helped her onto a commode chair with her catheter drainage bag hooked on the side. To ensure her privacy and comfort, I wrapped her in a blanket. With the portable oxygen and pain pump slung over my shoulder, we were off to the shower room.

I helped her wash her smooth head with shampoo and applied sweet smelling body wash as she wished. Once finished, I dried her off and helped her back to her room where I unwrapped all the tubes, gave her dry oxygen tubing, helped her dress, and assisted her back to bed. I had never seen someone to whom a shower meant so much. The whole venture took an hour and wore her out for the rest of the day. I was so glad that I could help her with something that she felt was so important, and was probably the last shower she ever had.



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