



SHE'S A TRUE NURSE, FROM HEAD TO TOE...INCLUDING HER HAIR!

Those who work in the field of health care have the desire to help others and ease their pain, more than anything else. They are also dedicated, respectful, and caring people. Every day they perform kind-hearted gestures, sometimes little things, sometimes things of a larger scale. There are hundreds of examples. Here is one.

"Don't show sympathy for your patients," she was told in her nursing courses. "Don't share in their suffering; you won't be efficient," Lucie Traversy was warned. However, this endoscopy nurse at the CHUS has never heeded that advice. When working with her patients, she shows affection, comforts them, holds their hands, and cries with them. Very simply, they are part of her life, and she devotes herself to their well-being, even outside of her working hours.

"I was at the hairdresser's ready to have my hair dyed. Another

woman was waiting to have her head shaved. She had cancer and didn't want to watch her hair fall out due to the chemotherapy. Her decision was made, but it was obviously very painful for her to go through with it. For her, losing her hair was more catastrophic than having cancer. That's when I spontaneously told her: "You won't be alone, I'm going to have my head shaved too," recalls Lucie.

A whim with punch

Flabbergasted, the hairdresser and the woman in question tried to convince her not to do that. "But my mind was made up: I wanted the same haircut – to show my support. The woman went under the clippers before I did. I sensed she was calmer and she handled the ordeal quite well. Then it was my turn, and that was when she burst into tears."

"There's not one woman alive who wants to have her hair



shaved completely off. Nonetheless, not once did I think of changing my mind. When it was over, there was not one, but three of us in the hairdressing salon in tears. I was crying not so much for my lost locks of hair, but more for this other woman's grief. I was a bit more aware of what she must be feeling. And I was happy to have made someone feel better.

For the most part, her family, friends and colleagues understood Lucie's gesture. However, wherever she went, Lucie was aware of people looking at her. They almost seemed to stare. "I could sense people trying to guess what type of cancer I might have. It was beyond belief – I wasn't even sick! Just think of the people who are really going through it!"

Time has passed and her hair has grown back. Lucie has not seen the customer from the hairdressing salon since that day, but she does know that the other woman has recovered. "I don't deserve any credit for what I did that day. It came naturally and I would do it again in a heartbeat. That's the way I am and I'm not the only one. There are lots of health professionals just like me."



SHOWING COMPASSION TOWARDS PATIENTS, ALSO INVOLVES...

Going the long way around to get to the hospital – to buy fruit or a fresh cup of coffee for a patient with no family. Bringing home, for the night, a little dog belonging to a patient who has to be hospitalized but has no one to come and pick up her

pet. Lending a video camera to a young mother in palliative care who dreams of leaving her children something to remember her by. Setting up a little second-hand clothing shop to provide clothing for patients who are destitute.

Empathy is quite simply showing concern and listening, taking the time to answer questions, being attentive, providing reassurance. It means being there for the other person, with all one's compassion, and with one's whole being.