

# Pragmatic Healers

Pages with reference to book, From 357 To 357

She was a thin frail lady, with a diagnosis that betrayed her constitution. She had Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, with advanced disease admitted this time with what seemed as intestinal obstruction. They did not have too much hope for her from the start.

A conservative line of management was initiated, but her condition continued to deteriorate and it was reluctantly decided to do a laparotomy and explore for a cause of her condition. They found adhesive loops obstructing her intestines. Post-operatively, she did relatively well. Her ward course from thereon was an endless follow-up of blood counts, electrolytes and culture reports. I followed her up for almost two weeks, never ceasing to be amazed with her zest for life. In due course, she had managed to dictate her own management considerably, asking for opiate pain killers for what she described as excruciating pain in every part of the body. Over time I came to know her quite well. Until one day.

We were in the operating theater for our usual procedures when we received an emergency call that she had crashed. Though she was intubated and resuscitated she passed away from what was assumed to be pulmonary embolism or an acute myocardial event.

I stood there groping for some explanation. She had been perfectly well just two hours before on the rounds and yet deep down inside I wanted to feel something for all that had happened, yet I could not manage to do so. It was as if somehow all my own emotions had been walled off from myself, consciously or unconsciously. It was not the first time that I had encountered a death on the wards and yet each time the same question resurfaces in the midst. Was this the real purpose of acclimatizing ourselves to everything around us, a process that starts right from the first day that you enter the hospital wards? The spectre of reality could never have been stranger. The paradoxes are enough to revulse any sane mind. Numbed emotions or that so called professional clinical detachment. A few hours later, I passed by and there was a new patient on that bed.

Life goes on and so it must as the mind struggles for the elusive compromise.