



## My Patient, My Friends: Part 2

### Description

#### I Am Useless

‘Doctor,’ the old lady sighed. ‘To be old is to be useless.’

She was not in bad shape. She did not have dementia. She was still mobile and could carry on her daily activities. Her daughters-in-law took turns taking care of her to share the burden of caregiving. But she told me, ‘Nobody wants me. I am being shifted like a football from one child to another.’

How can we make the old feel useful?

#### His Father’s Hands

Beauty comes unexpectedly. Recently, I saw a man coming to a care home to collect his father’s belongings. Mr X had just passed away in hospital.

‘Where do you stay?’ I asked his son. He didn’t answer me. Instead, he was lost in deep thought.

I noticed he was clasping two soft exercise balls in his hands and looking at them thoughtfully – toys he had bought for his father to strengthen his hands which a stroke had weakened. He fingered and looked at them silently. It was as if by touching them, he felt the warmth of his father’s hands that had held him when he was a little boy and which he had held in turn when his father was old and needed him.

#### I Remember His Mum

Steve came to see me for a fall. A look at his face reminded me of someone familiar. I looked at the name on his clinic card. It struck me. He was the son of a patient who had a tragic death when she was young, and her children were still small.

‘Are you....? Was your mum so and so?’ I asked, my curiosity getting the better of me.

'Why! You still remember her?' asked Steve in disbelief.'

'Yes, you must be still young when she passed away.'

'I was only six years old.'

'Yes, where are the rest of your brothers and siblings?' I asked. 'How is your father?'

We were catching up with the years. His mum had been a friend and patient of mine. Her sudden demise at a young age, when she took her own life, shocked me and the whole town. I was glad to be able to tell him what I remember about his mother.

'She was always a cheerful person. I still remember her as if she was still sitting before me.'

It was good to see that her children had grown up and now have families. I was glad to fill in some of the missing gaps and answer his questions about his late mum. Yes, we doctors can help our patients reconnect with their past!