UPDATE ON ENDNOTES “ALICE”

To the Editor:

I wrote a story published in the December 2013 issue of the *Journal of Gerontological Nursing* about a woman whose life was transformed from one of just existing to one filled with joy when she found a life-like doll that she believed was the infant taken from her at birth. Earlier that year, in August, the care home sent me a picture of “Alice’s” 99th birthday party, where she was sitting in a wheelchair with the “baby” in her arms and a big smile on her face.

I recently received word that she died in January 2014. According to staff, the last week of her life she chose to stay in bed with her baby next to her. She told everyone that she was dying and not to leave her alone; with the baby by her side, she did not die alone and was not buried alone. This brought me to thinking about person-centered care, which everyone claims to do, but then the social history is hidden in a chart so that the nursing assistants—those closest to residents—never see it. Nor does the housekeeping staff who cleans their rooms or the maintenance crew who are an important part of every facility.

Sometimes I think the social history is the best-kept secret. Why not keep a copy of it at the nurses’ station and require all staff to read it? However, it is important to keep in mind it is a “history” and may not reflect the resident’s life in the facility now. Every health care community should have a system in place to share and update important non-medical information so that all staff know all of the residents as individuals. *That* is person-centered care.

REFERENCE

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