

Dorothy case

Hello. My name is Dorothy. I am back home now, in my own apartment. Actually, it is a condo in a retirement village. I love it here and it's so wonderful to be in my own place, with my own furniture and family photos everywhere. My daughter chuckles when I tell people that I live independently, since I have help every day for eight hours and my four daughters are always here making sure I have what I need. I can't go shopping on my own, you see. I had a stroke three years ago; the doctor told me it was a unique kind of stroke since I lost being able to walk and stand and I have almost no feeling from the waist down. But I went to rehab and worked hard, and now I walk with a walker. Good for me. And I never lost my "marbles" as they say, which can happen with a stroke you know.

But it has been hard. I lost the ability to make urine and have a bowel movement on my own; I worked hard at this too. Not easy since I am 91 years old. But with a suppository every morning and going to the bathroom every few hours, I can manage. You see that's important, since if I want to stay in my own apartment, I have to be able to walk and take care of my personal needs. When the stroke happened, all I could think of was, "how am I going to get back to my apartment, go the dining room with my friends, and play bridge again?" But I am back *and* looking good, I might add.

I have a wonderful geriatric nurse practitioner here who I see Monday through Friday; her name is Christine. What would I do without her? She tells me how much of the water pill to take every day after she weighs me and she keeps my spirits up. Christine asked me to talk to you today, to tell you my story, especially the part about being in the hospital two weeks ago.

My heart skipped a few beats and Christine told me that I needed to go to the hospital to get the rhythm going again. I didn't want to go, since I signed the papers so that I would never need to be in an ICU and have all kind of tubes. But she said it would be quick and then I could come back here.

I was there three days. I am most thankful that the doctors got my heart going at a good pace again. But when my daughter came on the second day, I told her that I was so nervous. I brought my suppositories with me but the nurses said that I couldn't use them since the doctor had not "ordered" them – whatever that means. I told the nurses that my doctor had already given me a prescription and they did not need to have the heart doctor order them, but they said it was a rule, or something like that. The nurses told me not to worry if I had an accident, that they would clean me up. I was horrified and I cried. I work very, very hard at not having an accident, it's the most important thing to me. Please, please don't take my dignity away.

And I told my daughter that I was just lying in the bed, that no-one had walked with me and I need to walk three or four times a day or else I get stiff. My daughter called

Christine and she called the hospital and told them that my family would get me help in the day and night so that I could go home. And the nurses said the doctor needed to do more tests tomorrow; Christine told them that she would call the doctor. I left the next morning and when I left, I had never had a suppository and I had never left my bed.

I am never going back; I made Christine promise me. My daughters said it was OK too. I will stay here and die here, with my pearls on, in my own bed. When I lose my dignity, when I cannot walk and be clean, I will know it is time. I just wish the nurses in the hospital could have known me better and helped me be me.