One Common Goal and One Unified Wish: A Cure for Acute Leukemia

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Relationship-based care (RBC) is a theoretical framework best described as “when nurses and their colleagues own their practice and consciously create environments of healing, their efforts visibly affect the practitioners, the practice, and the physical space” (Koloroutis, 2004, p. 24). The Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute in Columbus, Ohio, adopted RBC in 2005 as the theoretic framework to guide nursing practice. As the RBC council of the 10E James Acute Leukemia Unit began working on primary nursing, they realized the need for a unit RBC project to inspire and unify staff to the newly developed unit vision.

Tara Shantz, BSN, RN, OCN®, made a suggestion inspired by a book that she had read, *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* (Coerr, 1977), about a young girl who developed leukemia after radiation exposure in Hiroshima. The ancient Japanese legend of Senbazuru (1,000 cranes) states that the person who folds 1,000 origami cranes will be granted a wish. Sadako began folding cranes, but eventually became too weak to complete her goal. Her friends and family helped finish her dream by folding the rest of the cranes, which were buried with Sadako. The RBC council embraced the idea of renewing this inspiring legend on the 10E James unit for one common goal and one unified wish, a cure for acute leukemia.

This RBC project was particularly unique because it involved families and members of the community, in addition to patients and the care team. The project started with a bulletin board that was decorated with a plaque explaining the legend, and included envelopes of origami paper and instructions for folding paper cranes. The message touched so many that the paper supplies needed to be continuously restocked. As each completed crane was returned, it became very clear that each one was created by hands seeking hope or providing hope, proving that there still is beautiful life to be lived, even in the midst of battling against leukemia.

The unit quickly received the amount of cranes needed for the project, far before plans for a display had been finalized. Kirsten Roblee, BSN, RN, OCN®, chair of the RBC council, took the vision of the crane project to The James RBC council and later to the nurse manager, Kelly

From left to right, Kirsten Roblee, Tara Shantz, and Erin Ferlet show one of the many origami cranes in front of the display inspired by *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* in the 10E James Acute Leukemia Unit at The Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute in Columbus, Ohio. The cranes are handmade by patients, family members, and staff.

Photographs courtesy of the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center.

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The Acute Leukemia Team Creed
We are the acute leukemia team.
We are dedicated members of the hematology service.
We serve our patients and their families, and live The James values every day.
We will never accept defeat, and will continue to strive for a leukemia-free world.
We place our patients first.
We are advocates for our patients, their families, our coworkers, and ourselves.
We are experts and professionals; competent, compassionate, and caring.
We will continue to build relationships with ourselves and each other, thereby better serving our patients.
We will ask for help, offer help, and accept help to meet the needs of our patients and each other.
We lend an ear, a helping hand, and our hearts each day to all those involved in our fight.
We are guardians to those we serve and to The James way of life.
We are the acute leukemia team.
We are proud.

Tomlinson-Pickham, MS, RN, OCN®, for approval and financial backing. All were inspired by the vision of the project, and resources were provided. The unit RBC council then endeavored to design a display worthy of such an inspiring vision within the constraints of available materials, regulations, and finances.

Erin Ferlet, MS, RN, named chair of the unit RBC council in 2011, led the group in designing a preliminary vision of the crane display. The background design depicts a sun rising from the ocean, representing new beginnings and the hope of bringing brightness into people’s lives. The sunrise symbolizes the start of each new day and the chance to begin again. The design is comprised of more than 1,000 cranes in all different hues of orange, signifying leukemia awareness. All of the cranes were handmade by patients, families, and staff who joined together to work toward a cure for leukemia. Some of the cranes even have messages written inside of them, messages of encouragement or in memory of those who have been affected by leukemia.

More than 1,000 cranes, in hues of orange, span two large boards with the image of a sun rising over water. Researching the legend, Roblee chose the words that would be screened onto the plexiglass, appearing to float over the cranes: “In Japan, cranes are symbols of good luck, happiness, and longevity. Japanese legend states, if you make 1,000 paper cranes, a crane will grant you a wish. After World War II, making 1,000 cranes became a symbol for something larger—a hope for peace and healing. This project encompasses our wish: peace and healing for our patients and for a leukemia-free world.” At the bottom of the plexiglass, designed in the same fashion as the story, is an explanation: “Each crane was folded with care by our staff, families, and patients. Some even hold messages inside. Join us in our wish. . . .”

References