Compassionate Care
Maily Tran

I walked into the office trying to take everything in. As a physical therapist aide, I was a little nervous and didn't know what to expect. I could not have predicted that one of the patients I would help was *not* in the best mood. She completed each exercise with haste, sighing, "What's next?"

Despite this, I recognized her discomfort and stayed with her until the end. Before she left, she paused and said, "Thank you." These two words were said with such sincerity that it made me pause before I responded, "You're welcome."

My momentary surprise stemmed from a commonly-held belief that first impressions are irreversible. However, there is much more to learn about our patients than what we can gather in our first interactions. As time passed, I began to recognize this woman may have had a source of pain, frustration, stress, anxiety... that could not be alleviated with therapy, but with compassion.

I envision the presence of compassion in healthcare centering around the core belief that whatever time we can spend with patients, we remember that these patients are *people*. This means seeing individuals as more than their condition, more than a number, and especially, more than a source of revenue. When people seek care, there is a reason why they chose to come see you. It might have been a deliberate choice, a necessity, or they may have had no say at all. When they arrive, they may be taking everything in and feeling a little nervous. Although they don't know what will happen, they expect compassionate care.

As a former physical therapy patient, myself, the healthcare providers I remember are not necessarily the ones who had the most experience or the most acronyms after their names. The

individuals I remembered were those who truly listened and not just heard. They were the ones who genuinely attempted to understand my past, my current state, and my wishes for the future. They were the ones who respectfully acknowledged my troubles and acted upon their desire to help in any way possible. They were the ones who made me smile.

Now, as I pursue a career in physical therapy, I wish to translate these past experiences into providing meaningful care.I hope to promote compassion in my practice by treating individuals as *whole* people who each have a mind, body, and soul.Although I acknowledge this is difficult, I recognize that this compassion needs to be extended to myself.As healthcare professionals, we can become physically, mentally, and emotionally-invested in our work. This can leave us feeling both invigorated and depleted.

Despite this inner conflict, many people choose to work in healthcare because of an underlying motivation to try to make a positive difference.They recognize that as humans, everyone experiences their own struggles.They recognize that as healthcare providers, the ability to act upon this common bond has both power and meaning.Compassion connects us to our patients, as *people*, as we provide care and heal together.