**NHS Education for Scotland**

**Transcript of ‘Dead Patients Club’ Film**

I was very fortunate to be able to interview the comedian and author Cariad Lloyd during one of our bereavement conferences. I was talking to Cariad in the context of bereavement because her father died when she was fifteen. And now that she's in her thirties, she'd been reflecting on how that had affected her life. And she'd written a book called 'You Are Not Alone', which goes over those reflections and learnings that she had around her father's death.

One thing she talked about in her book was her realisation that she was in the dead dad club and that she'd met many other people who were in the club, as she called it, either the dead mum club or dead husband club etc. And I had said to her at the beginning of the interview, and I was almost apologetic about it, that I didn't feel I was a member of the club because I was fortunate that both my parents still alive and there was nobody really close to me had died. Shouldn’t have said that, was perfectly fine. Not everybody had to be in the club. But as the interview progressed, I did have a bit of a light bulb moment when I realised I actually was in the club. I was in the dead patient club. And whilst she'd been talking, I had been reflecting on a few patients who really stuck with me. And it's got me thinking in general about dead patients club because I suspect there are many health and social care professionals who are also in that club, but maybe just don't realise it.

I'm a kidney doctor and sadly I know many patients to die over the years, but there are two who really kind of stick with me. The first one was probably the first patient I ever did witness dying. And that was when I was a junior doctor, not long after I graduated and I was called to a medical ward in the early hours in the morning. Because a lady who had come in with a heart attack earlier in the day had become extremely breathless. It was pretty clear to me that she had gone into quite significant heart failure. And I remember trying to comfort her while starting all the kind of medical actions that we needed to do. Because it, she was clearly terrified. I always remember her hand gripping my forearm really tightly as I was trying to, you know, insert needles and things in and get drugs started. And then the feeling of that grip just going slack. And I looked and her head had dropped back and she'd gone into cardiac arrest. Sadly, we were unable to revive her from that cardiac arrest. And when I think back, I just moved on that night, went and saw another patient, just carried on as if nothing really happened. And I think, you know, despite over the years witnessing many more patients go into cardiac arrest and die, that lady is the one that really sticks with me.

Another patient that, that is really in the sort of forefront of my mind is one that was many years later in my career when I was a consultant and working as a kidney doctor. Now one of the aspects of being a kidney doctor that I've always really loved is the opportunity to get to really know patients and know their families and their stories and their hobbies and everything. And I knew this particular patient well, I'd known him for many years and he was a lovely man, but he'd been having quite a lot of really significant problems. And the day I, I recall he'd come in, particularly poorly and he required a procedure and I was the one to do that procedure. And without going into any great detail, things went wrong. And he became acutely unwell, had to be transferred to emergency theatre and then to critical care unit. But after lots of really valiant efforts on the behalf of many of my colleagues, he sadly died. And, and that really crushed me. And there was an extensive investigation which showed lots of kind of system errors that had led to the problems. And even though many of my colleagues told me afterwards, well, that, you know, this wasn't your fault, I still felt incredibly guilty and responsible. And I met with his daughter and some other family members the day after he died. And that was an incredibly difficult meeting as you can imagine. Daughter had many questions, rightly so, but she was devastated. And she ended that meeting showing me pictures of his grandchildren, which again, sticks with me. We were all in tears at the end of that meeting.

So, I, thinking about this recently within the context of the dead patient club, it did make me reflect on the last kind of ten, twelve years of my career. Because after that episode, it's very noticeable that my career has become less clinical and more of a medical manager. And I do wonder if something subconsciously has led me down that track, taking me away from clinical work and perhaps into something that maybe I perceive as a bit safer and not in that clinical area. And I don't know if that's the case. There's no answer to that question, but it's something I've been reflecting upon recently and I think it's important to share this story because I suspect there's many others of us out there who've been in similar positions and talking about these things does help. And I know talking about this particular case has helped me. Thank you.

The film was produced in October 2024 and can be found at [www.sad.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk) or <https://vimeo.com/906402467>.

For more information visit [www.sad.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk) or contact supportarounddeath@nes.scot.nhs.uk

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