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## Message from the Spiritual Advisor: Physician-Patient Relationship

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## Message from the Spiritual Advisor



### Physician-Patient Relationship

Almost inevitably the patient is the one who searches out the physician. After being troubled with an illness, he or she usually decides that a way must be found to solve his or her problem. Looking into the professional health care field for a competent physician, the patient decides that you are the one he or she wants to follow.

Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth and the life," and as another Christ, the physician is called upon to outline a plan for the patient who calls to put him on the "road to recovery." Even though the path you outline may be indeed difficult, the patient is asking that you chart the way.

Since your patient trusts in you, you are compelled to share the truth with him. He sees you as one speaking with authority, and as a person who would in no way "string him along" with a jargon which is nonfactual. When a patient is suffering in a terminal illness, it can be most difficult to say it as it is, yet the truth must be told with a gentle tone, with words of hope, and with a feeling that is faith-filled.

Through your way, your truth, you are able to speak of life — that new life which continues beyond human suffering and pain.

This patient, once unknown by you, has now become a very important "partner" in your relationship. He has entrusted his very life into your hands, and with your treating him, a bond has been established. It has become a relationship with a special status, that is sacred.

Relationships vary with different people. With God, our relationship is absolute: "I am your God, you are My people." Other rela-

tionships, as in marriage or in religious life, are solemn. Still others are more than meaningful; they are seen as holy, such as that between physician and patient. In each relationship, there is a commitment to help the other to spiritual happiness, and to holiness. For the sick person, you have become a sign of hope. You are his Christ-like savior.

You have become more than a counselor, physician, and priest. In this bonding you have established yourself in a redemptive relationship which is eternal. It is indeed a paradox: a sick, weakened person searches you out to "show him the way," and in truth, by your doing so, "the way is shown to you." A miracle occurs, a change takes place, there is a healing; but this time it takes place in you. You have become the beneficiary of your patient's redemptive suffering.

Through your concern of caring for the sick person and showing him the way, your investment rewards you with overwhelming dividends, for now you share in the benefits of his perpetual inheritance.

It is common knowledge that partnerships dissolve at the death of one of the parties. Yet your physician-patient relationship, which is truly sacred, continues into eternity as your partner, your patient, is face-to-face with the Redeemer.

— Msgr. Dino Lorenzetti