

MANAGING ESTRANGED RELATIONSHIPS AT THE END OF LIFE

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CASE DESCRIPTION

“**T**here is so much love in this room,” hospice nurse Martha said almost immediately following our introductions as two of the hospice team members that would be caring for Cheryl and her family. “I’m Cory, Dr. Cory Ingram, it is a pleasure to meet all of you,” I had offered. I asked, “Cheryl, who is visiting you today?” “This is my husband, Randy, and in laws, Randy’s parents, Doris and Larry and my brother and sister-in-law Mike and Judy. “This is my wife, Michelle, and Judy’s husband, Bob,” Mike explained. They were all very upbeat and it would have been hard to imagine for an outsider that Cheryl, age 48, was likely in the last two weeks of life having just decided to discontinue hemodialysis due to the progressive nature of her lung cancer, despite treatments.

“They are all visiting from Mantorville where Randy and I grew up, just down the street from each other”, Cheryl added. Nurse Martha, interested to learn more about Cheryl and all that was important to her, inquired about her side of the family. “My parents live in the same house I grew up in, just down the street from Doris and Larry, and have for the last 53 years.” Cheryl added. “We look forward to meeting them