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It was last two months ago on 5th November when I escorted my friend Emily Bwanali to see her cousin who was seriously sick at a certain village known by Mimundilinde in Balaka District. Her cousin was Josephy Mbewe and he was living in Blantyre where he was working. Josephy was seriously sick by the time I saw him at this Parents' home where he came to look for herbs after being told by the Doctors at the hospital that Josephy was not sick. They found no any disease in his body therefore they came back to look for tradition herbs.

When we reached Josephy's home, we found his sister looking after him since his parents were away to the herbourists. Looking for the symptoms that Josephy had, I thought and I hope that it was Aids. Josephy looked very thin and lost weight. He was failing even to move his body changing the position. He had shortage of hair. He was vomiting oftenly. He had diarrhoea and he was also coughing. Josephy was very talkative and troublesome patient. He was asking for many things at once and the caregiver was failing to do all that things at the same time. And she was always shouting at the patient. After I stayed for some minutes I had the chance to interview the caregiver (his sister) about his brother's sickness.

Alice: What disease is your brother suffering from?

Sister: I don't know but he is just mentioning about many diseases.

Alice: Many diseases like what?

Sister: As for now, he is suffering from headache, coughing and he has diarrhoea. I forgot one thing also, he is vomiting and his body temperature is high.

Estere: Is he still vomiting? I found him vomiting last month again.

Patient: Ah keep quite! Who is vomiting here? I want to sit down now sister. Fast, I would like to vomit (he started vomiting in his tin)

Estere: Are you alone today?

Sister: Yes, my parent's have gone to look for the herbourist. But my brother is troubling me too much. I am tired now.

Alice: When did he start suffering from this disease.

Sister: I think this is now 6 months if not 7

Alice: Are you sure?

Sister: Yes

Alice: Where is his wife?

Sister: He has no wife and that is why he has taken this disease.

Estere: Aah do you mean he has taken it from women?

Patient: Sister! Take me out please. I would like to burst on the sun.

Sister: I can't manage to take you out.

Patient: I have said that I would like a banana please. Fast I am hungry.

Sister: Hi that is your own problem now. Where do you think I can get a banana here?

Alice: What about at the market, don't they sell bananas?

Sister: Aah I am tired now and even my mother is tired with him.

Alice: Do you mean you are tired with buying bananas for him?

Sister: No, he is very troublesome as if her was with us when he was getting that Aids. He was fond of girls with no choice and my mother was telling him that he should just get married to someone than having many girlfriends but he was answering her that he was still young to get married.

Estere: Is he suffering from Aids?

Sister: Off-course that is.

Alice: How do you know?

Sister: He was fond of women.

Patient: Aah is that true sister? Tell me that woman who has given me Aids? Alice! Am I suffering from Aids?

Alice: No, that is not true. Josephy, tell me yourself, what disease are you suffering from?

Josephy: I am not sick. I would like rice with eggs. Tell my sister to bring them please.

Sister: Where can I get them? Wait for mother. Had I have money I could have gone to buy them.

Josephy: A toilet.

Estere: Ee maybe we have delayed to escot him to the toilet. He has already done it where he has slept. Let us just change him his clothes cousin. More over it is diarrhoea.

Sister: We don't escot him to the toilet. He can manage to walk. We are doing everything for him while there.

Alice: Everything like what?

Sister: Bathing him, giving him a chamber as his toilet, helping him eating because he can't manage to pick food with his hands therefore we just put food to his mouth and he eats but not always. Sometimes he refuses and this is now 2 days, he is not eating anything.

Alice: Eeh sorry, Are there other things which you also do for him apart from what you have already told me?

Sister: Yes, we wash clothes for him, we also do physical exercise for him since he is failing even to move his body. We also clean his teeth and helping him drink his medicine and even any drink.

Estere: But you are wrong. Who told you that he is suffering from Aids?

Sister: He is very troublesome.

Alice: Is troublesome a sign or symptom of Aids?

Sister: No, but he is doing things same as those who are suffering from Aids.

Alice: What is he doing?

Sister: Ee but Alice. Why are you asking me those many questions?

Estere: Because you are hating your brother. You have forgotten that one day you shall be sick and you shall need someone to look after you. And as I can see at you, I hope you shall be very troublesome that your brother. If he is suffering from Aids, you shall also die with Aids.

Sister: Ha! Ha! Ha! Why? Am I fond of boys? You know, my brother was fond of girls and no choice. Now he is suffering from many diseases at once.

Alice: Many diseases like what?

Sister: He sometimes suffers from Maliria, Headache, diarrhoea as you have already seen him. And he also vomits everyday. Last month he was suffering from shingles as you can see one part of his body and nowadays, he is just talking alone (himself) and sometimes you cannot get what he is saying. He can ask you to do many things at once for him.

Alice: Ohoo! What about other people when they come to see him. What disease are they saying Josephy is suffering from?

Sister: Many people in the villages around rumourly are saying that this A is Aids.

Alice: Why?

Sister: I don't know.

Estere: You know it. If you have said yourself that this is Aids what more about outsiders? You are telling them that he is suffering from Aids. That is very bad.

Sister: Aah, can I tell them that this is Aids? No. People are just thinking of that Aids disease but not being taught.

Alice: Okay. How long has he been sick?

Sister: Its almost a year now because during the first days he was sick but not serious as it is. He was walking himself, bathing. He was doing everything for himself. This is now 5 or 6 months since the situation changed.

Alice: As you can see the situation, is he now better or what?

Sister: Aah, Alice, you can look at him yourself. Is there any good change? This is now worse. He cannot move any part of his body for himself. He can't carry (pick) even a tea spoon there. He can't turn his head. He needs someone doing everything for him. And I don't think he will be better my brother. Even my Parents have said that they have gone to look for last treatment. If those herbs won't help, they will never go elsewhere now.

Alice: Did you ever gone to the hospital with him?

Sister: Off-course yes. Firstly he was admitted at Queen Elizabeth Central hospital and they came back, They went also to a certain herbarists where they lived there for almost a month but no change. Then they went to Balaka hospital for 6 weeks and they came back. After that they looked for other herbarists for 3 weeks and then they went back to the hospital for 3 weeks also at Liwonde hospital but still no change. They came back and now they are just going to the herbarists for herbs and take the herbs for him. They have said that they will not go anywhere anymore.

Estere: Ah tell them not to get tired soon. They should continue looking medicine for him until he will get recovered.

Sister: Do you think that he will get recovered?

Alice: Yes, why not?

Sister: Aah things are becoming worse now. There is no any single day we could say that he is better. Everyday we say it is worse.

Alice: Okay but as you could see what problems are you facing when you are giving care to him?

Sister: Eeh many problems, like changing him clothes and washing those clothes for him since he is also suffering from diarrhoea, bathing him and he is troublesome. He can tell you to do many things at once for him.

Alice: Ohoo what about many other problems?

Sister: The great problem is that we are felling to do our own daily job at home like clearing our land. Doing any type of business and even having a small journey for chatting.

Alice: Mmm sorry. That is true, you can't do anything while your relative is seriously sick as he is. Okay. What about advantages you are facing when looking after this patient?

Sister: I can't see any advantage. Only that he is my brother, we cannot leave him alone and I think he could have already died had it been that we have left him with no any care. He could have died with hunger and worries.

Estere: But still he have worries because you are always shouting at him.

Sister: Aa no. Though I am shouting at him but still I'm assisting him with many things.

Alice: Apart from you and mother, is there anyone among your relatives who are also helping you looking after your patient?

Sister: We are only 3 people. My mother, me and my father.

Alice: Ohoo now who is the main caregiver among you three people?

Sister: My mother.

Alice: Now, you and your father, how are you helping your mother looking after the patient?

Sister: My father also looks after the patient but not oftenly. He is the one who goes to many places looking for money which we are using for buying everything which is needed at home daily and I am the one who looks after him always if my mother is buzy or if she is away as you have seen me today. I am washing clothes for him, changing him position to sleep, giving him water to drink and many jobs.

Estere: Aa Alice, why are you asking her those many questions. Would you like to help her?

Alice: Mm can't you see that she looks so lonely and is always buzy. Had it been that you are the one looking after the patient, you could have been crying always, You can't manage doing all what your cousin is doing. Can you?

Estere: Aah maybe I can.

Alice: Is your father working?

Sister: No. I am coming shortly.

Alice: Oh yes, he is now vomiting. Sorry.

Sister: Can you help me, I would like to change him the bedsheet.

Alice: Okay, worry not. Is that okay?

Sister: I will wash them next time. I am tired now, I would like to rest for a few minutes.

Alice: Mm sorry. You have said that your father is not working. Is he doing any business for him to find money for daily use?

Sister: No, He receives money at every 16th of each month since he was a Primary School Teacher and he now received his pension.

Alice: Ohoo! How much money do you think he spends for each month buying things and paying the herbarists?

Sister: I cannot know.

Alice: Just estimate the figure.

Sister: Ah maybes more than K1,000 each month.

Alice: Now, buy the time you bathe him or doing any kind of job for him, what things do you use for that job.

Sister: Its always water and soap.

Alice: Okay but many people fear to bathe or wash the patients clothes plane without something to protect them from getting diseases. What about you, do you also use something for protection?

Sister: Aah no, we don't have anything and we can't get it.

Alice: Why not?

Sister: Aah Had it been that one can get the disease through giving care to the patient, we could have already taken it but I think you can get it through sex. My brother had many girlfriends and the bargirls. I hope he has taken the disease from one of them.

Alice: Aah how you do you know?

Sister: Aa one of his girlfriends was also sick, she had same symptoms as he is having and she died two months ago. And I know also someone who was also his girlfriend, That one is just becoming thin and weak. She will also soon suffer from this disease.

Alice: By the time you were at the hospital with him, were you given the instructions of caregiving the patient?

Sister: I don't know since I was here, my mother was the one looking after him at the hospital.

Alice: Okay, but I have experienced one thing in you. You are always hash to the patient, always shouting at him. Why?

Sister: Aa I am tired now, he is troubling me.

Alice: Is there another time which you just do things for him or talk with him freely and lovely?

Sister: Ha! Ha! Ha! Sometimes.

Alice: As you can see him, Is he satisfied with the help you are giving him?

Sister: Are no, he can't even appreciate.

Alice: Why can't he appreciate?

Sister: I don't know.

Alice: How do you know that he is not appreciating for what you are doing for him?

Sister: He is always very troublesome.

Alice: Did he ever tell you that he is not satisfied with your help to him?

Sister: No he never told me that but action tells. He shows that we are doing nothing to him.

Estere: He cannot tell you anything since he is seriously sick and it seems now his brain is not functioning properly. He is somehow abnormal. He doesn't know what he is doing. You have to forgive him always.

Alice: Tell me, maybe he told someone that he is not happy with your help to him or the help is not enough to him?

Sister: No, he never told anybody about that, Maybe if he once did that but we never heard anybody talking about that.

Alice: Mmm. Apart from what you have told me, is there other problems that you are meeting with by the time you are caregiving him?

Sister: Those are the only problems we are meeting. There is no even a single advantage we are meeting with here.

Alice: What do you mean sister?

Estere: This one likes her brother to die. Though that one will die just know that you shall die also. There is nobody who is special for a seed in this world. Do you think you van find any advantage the time you are caregiving your relative? You wanted him to pay you money since you are working for him? You are silly cousin. One day you shall feel sick and if by that time I shall still be alive, you should just know that I shall come and ask you many question as my friend ALICE is doing and mine shall be silly questions as your answers to Alice are.

Alice: Estere, You should have wait for her answer to my question. Maybe she meant something different to what your thoughts are. Allow her to answer me and tell me whatever she knows. That is not good Estere.

Ester: Aaa what can she tell you other than revealing that she is tired with her brother?

Alice: Hii Has she told you about that Estere?

Estere: Can't you hear what she is telling you.

Patient: Sister! I need a chicken.

Sister: Wait for mother, I can't kill a chicken while mother is away. Wait for her. She is coming very soon.

Patient: I want to burst in the sun. I need to vomit.

Alice: Vomit here first and then we shall take you out to burst in the sun.

Estere: You are lucky cousin, I have heard your mother's voice somewhere near those trees over there. Maybe she is coming.

Alice: I think you shall have time now to go and wash those patients' dirty clothes. Will you go to the river.

Sister: We don't have any river here just near by. Unless it is rain season. My mother washes those dirty clothes besides that toilet. I just help her drawing much water for washing.

Alice: Why not you yourself washing those clothes instead of your mother.

Sister: He sometimes vomits on those clothes and he has diarrhoea and he does that diarrhoea where he has slept as you have seen that I have changed him the blanket. Can I manage cleaning those things?

Alice: Ooh yes. Why not. He is your brother. Don't you clean him his teeth?

Sister: Aah but mother does. I just change him the clothes if my mother is away. But my father is the one who bathes him always but mostly mother is because father is mostly away to look for money somewhere.

Alice: Okay, thank you, I have learnt your experience of caregiving a Patient today.