

Moments That Ground Us: Gratitude in the Neuropalliative Journey

November 2025

This Blog was our colleague, Ambereen Mehta's idea (Thank you, Ambereen!). Thanks to that idea it has blossomed into a space that we have grown to love and cherish.

To those of you who have taken the time to share your thoughts and writings throughout the year, we would like to say that your words have given us many moments of reflection and reasons to smile and feel gratitude.

With this special edition of our INPCS blog, we hope you will give yourself a few moments to pause, read, and recognize the many gifts you bring to our community. Wishing you all a season of all that warms your hearts and joy!

With hearts full of gratitude,

Sandhya Seshadri and Christine Zizzi

Co-Chairs, INPCS Strategic Communications Committee



As the year draws to a close, we are called to slow down and reflect. **This season reminds us to pause, breathe, and pay attention to the good in our lives, even in the midst of imperfection.**

In the United States we celebrate Thanksgiving Day, a day to gather with family and friends. In the midst of the feasts and family time, think of the small things that add up and make our lives whole—shared meals, laughter, safe spaces, kindness offered or received, memories made, a hot cup of coffee, the presence of people who make our days feel lighter...

Ambereen Mehta, Palliative care physician

"You must be so sad working in palliative care. How do you do it? You must be an angel." That's usually the response I get when I share what I do. However, it is a privilege that brings daily gratitude for all those that I get to care for- patients and care partners who walk the path of illness with such grace. Grace that I don't know if I would have but aspire to have should I be ill one day.

My heart is filled with gratitude and peace for each patient and family member that I have been privileged to walk with during some of the greatest challenges of their lives.

Jason Casey, Former care partner

Years ago, my wife Kirsten was diagnosed with glioblastoma. I remain deeply grateful to the neuropalliative care team who stood alongside us, centering Kirsten's values and wishes through the course of her treatment, and helping us make the precious time Kirsten had with our young sons the best it could be. Their excellent care improved our quality of life through an incredibly challenging time.

Everyone deserves that kind of care, and my hope for the years ahead is that neuropalliative care is available as early as possible after diagnosis.

Shelley Varner Perez, Research Chaplain & Program Manager

Sharing a human connection with a person seeking neuropalliative care reminds me that moments that provide joy and grounding can be small and seemingly mundane.

Sometimes that which we most seek is not the greatest thing we could imagine, but the moment that gives our spirit a sense of peace in the present moment.

Melissa Ko, Neuro-ophthalmology Physician

In the midst of a group of people with neurological illnesses and vision loss, I saw and witnesses joy of a kind that I am ever grateful for. I was invited to participate in one of the weekly art therapy sessions at Indiana University Neuroscience Center. Loss of vision could not take away the joy of painting beautiful landscapes. I saw a person with bilateral vision loss paint in black, white, and grey so that they could see contrasted images more clearly. Another drew a landscape from memory, despite their tremors while holding a paintbrush. In the course of a year, this group became a circle of friends who spent time outside of class despite their illnesses. I came away with gratitude for the opportunity to "see" the power of whole person care and their flourishing as individuals and a community.

With all that feels dark in the world of late, I shed joyful tears for the light of this group that was so bright and positive.

Julia Simmons, *Former caregiver & Strategic Project Manager of International Alliance of ALS/MND Associations*

I am simply grateful that Neuropalliative Care exists and for the wonderful, kind, and open-hearted people I have met in this community. As a former caregiver, it is so important to family members to have compassionate people available to them to answer questions and provide guidance during the disease.

Farrah Daly, *Neuropalliative Care Physician & President Elect INPCS*

I am grateful to work at the intersection of neurology and palliative care as it gives me skills and experience to re-connect a person to their actual life within the context of their medical life. I often build deeply meaningful and sustaining connections with those I care for, and I am grateful to be a small part of their path in life.

It is a precious experience to be invited into someone's home during a very vulnerable period in their lives. I am grateful for people's willingness to trust and share with me, and for all I learn from them about adaptation and resilience.

Jacob Sanders, *Medical student*

In palliative care, I have the opportunity to be the “listener.” I learned this from a patient who wished to discuss hospice care. He told me that even though I was only a medical student, I was one of the first people who seemed to genuinely listen to why he did not want further treatment. I am grateful to him as it helped me to realize that *as a medical student and future physician, more than the pursuit of medicine, I need to listen and respect a patient's goals.*

Brennan Summers, *INPCS Executive Director*

My role as Executive Director of INPCS is more than a job for me. After many years in the corporate world, I longed for an opportunity to make a real difference - or at least support those who do. Being part of the INPCS team and helping you advance our mission fulfills that desire.

This work is also deeply personal. Neurologic illness has touched my life in many ways over the years. My grandmother suffered from dementia. My mother has experienced multiple TIAs. My father, while in the hospital recovering from COVID, experienced a stroke that ultimately led to COVID taking his life. My wife's grandfather passed away from ALS. And a good friend when I was younger also died of ALS. These experiences fuel my commitment to our cause.

I am truly thankful for the chance to work alongside INPCS and its extraordinary members. Together, we are not only advancing science and care—we are changing lives.

Benzi Kluger, MD, *Neuropalliative care physician and President of INPCS*

I am very grateful for having had the pleasure and honor to serve as President for the International Neuropalliative Care Society for the past 5 years. As I will be handing over the baton to Farrah, I am

awestruck by what our community has achieved in relatively short period of time and also excited to see what we accomplish over the coming 5 years.

I am grateful for the culture of kindness, openness, and doing-good-in-the-world that characterizes our growing community, the passion of our members for improving care for people living with neurologic illness and their families, our current cadre of leaders who are making INPCS successful in delivering on our mission and vision, and the numerous future leaders that are emerging in our community who will take INPCS and neuropalliative care to new heights.

*“We made it! This dream is really happening and is ready to take its place in the larger world.”
Thank you all for making this dream a reality!!*