

If we knew then what we know now...

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Mom and dad went on a cruise to South America after celebrated their golden anniversary in January 2008. Upon returning from the cruise, Dad found out that he had a sizable tumor in his colon which required immediate surgery to have it removed. We were caught by surprise, as dad never mentioned about any pain or discomfort to us. Doctor said that the surgery is pretty common and has a very good chance of recovery. As we didn't see any other options, dad went ahead and had the surgery in March 2008, shortly after his 76th birthday.

The surgery took much longer than expected. The doctor said that the tumor was big and he had to remove dad's spleen as well, but overall the surgery went well. Dad was trying very hard to bare with the pain and hoping to recover as quickly as possible. However, there was a sign of infection that just wouldn't clear even after all the medication. Everyday we tried to encourage dad to keep up the spirit while waiting to hear some positive news from the doctor, yet we never really got much directions but to wait some more.

Then the nurse asked us to sign some paper about medical directives in case of emergency. Before we were about to check off the boxes to do everything possible to sustain dad's life, the nurse gently advised me that she wouldn't do that if it was for her own parents and told me the effects of those procedures. It made me think twice especially with dad's condition at the time. As much as we were not prepared for the worse, the reality didn't promise a sure recovery either. It was definitely a very hard decision, especially knowing that mom has always been relying on dad to take care of everything around the house. We worried so much that mom would be devastated losing dad unexpectedly and just wanted to keep him alive with whatever it takes. But watching dad getting worse day by day and how much he struggled wanting to go home was really heart-wrenching.

We prayed for God's guidance during this difficult time. As much as we were afraid of losing dad, it was hard to see him suffer too.

In the last few days, we made a difficult decision to put a ventilator on dad due to his breathing problem. But when the doctor told us that they may need to do dialysis due to dad's kidney failure, we decided that it was enough. Since the chance of dad recovering appeared to be slim by that time, there was no point to prolong his suffering. So we asked the doctor not to do dialysis, but to help him ease the pain and allow him to go peacefully in his time. I whispered in dad's ear that we promised to take good care of mom and he could go in peace.

The whole journey in the hospital took about four weeks, yet it was the longest and darkest time in our life. We were sort of relieved at the end, knowing that dad no longer had to suffer, because even if he came out of the hospital, he would have to deal with other treatments and a

long recovery due to the size of the cut from the surgery, and the quality of life was not promised. The only regret was that we wish we could have shortened his suffering by not trying to do all sorts of unnecessary procedures. Letting go of a loved one is never easy, but making them suffer for our own sake is also selfish. It was a hard lesson learned from a painful experience, but I am truly grateful for the advice given by that nurse!