

## **They Stand Between Us and the Culture of Death line**

### **The Thin White Line**

A friend of mine once said her current job consisted of wiping old ladies' bottoms. The work of geriatric care assistants must surely, at times, be very unpleasant and arduous – though probably very rewarding.

I've recently been visiting a 93-year-old relative who, a short while ago, was admitted to a care home. It must be very easy, I found myself thinking, for staff to slowly – perhaps unknowingly - succumb to the temptation to lose complete respect for their patients, who, I would guess, can be very demanding, difficult, intransigent, and even querulous; and deafness can often render communication – so vital to a positive caring relationship, I would think – almost impossible.

Indeed, some bad cases have come to light where such a thing has happened; they are very rare. And the relatives of the elderly can easily come to think that the carers, and the care homes, are far from perfect, not delivering services to the level they have envisioned in their possibly-idealist imaginations. (And relatives can so easily slip into resenting the amount of commitment and effort required – and the amount of their elders' estate that is consumed by the cost of appropriate care.) Patience, on the part of everyone, has to be endless; total selflessness is needed. Any commitment to the valuing of human life – such as care of the elderly and infirm - *costs*.

That's why, despite any faults (which anyone in any situation has) I think a very great debt is owed to the heroines (they seem, mostly, to be women) in their waist-length white uniforms, who staff the ever-increasing number of elderly peoples' homes. They are the thin white line that stands between us and a simply appalling involuntary euthanasia programme which a future State will surely create, and which will probably visit our children – if not we ourselves.

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