

*„She was a like an angel of salvation
for my mother“*



Supporting the final phase of life with Peter Hess® sound therapy by Gabriele Seidenath

I work in the Helios Amper Clinic in Dachau as specialty nurse for anesthesia and intensive care as well as palliative care. There, I conduct sound therapy on ventilated or comatose patients in the ICU (compare report in FZ 10/2015, p. 12-15) and patients receiving palliative care. Therapy is often requested by family members or by the palliative care team for patients in their pre-final or final phase of life before departing from us. One morning, the

palliative care team asked me to support Ms. G in her final hours. I thus could accompany Ms. G and her family in the dying process with sound.

To express her gratitude, Ms. G's daughter wanted to do something positive for me. Based on her request, I asked her to describe her mother's final hours from her perspective, if she could. This resulted in the following experience report for which I am very grateful:



Photo:
Gabriele Seidenath

Description by the daughter of her mother's final hours

With the exception of age-related symptoms such as backpain, etc., my mother (age 85) was still a mentally and physically-fit, independent woman. On Wednesday, 11/22/2017, she was still driving her car around noon to buy branches for a Christmas wreath. While trimming these branches, it appears she suffered a spontaneous brain hemorrhage, probably due to her high blood pressure which she had been battling for a few months. Thankfully, she was found quickly and brought to the hospital. There, she evidenced hemiparesis on the left side of her body and speech difficulties but was still fully conscious. However, we, her children, were informed that, based on results of an MRI, the chances of recovery were poor, even if the bleeding could be stopped. Toward evening, another MRI was conducted, which showed that the hemorrhage had progressed, as had the symptoms of my mother: she could no longer move her left foot, and she was less responsive. As early as the next morning, she was no longer responsive at all, and the senior physician informed us that further measures (relieving intercranial pressure, etc.) had not resulted in any improvement. We were told that her chances for survival were slim and that, at best, she would remain completely dependent on nursing care. In accordance with my mother's request, who did not wish to be fully dependent on care and had executed an advance directive to that effect, we, her children, decided to refuse life-extending measures for my mother. Based on that decision, my mother was transferred to a regular care unit on Thursday and was put on a morphine pump for pain management. We were supported by the extraordinarily caring palliative

team of the Dachau hospital. My mother was no longer responsive, and her breathing became increasingly labored with thickening mucous congestion. On the third day, Saturday, 11/25/2018, my mother's condition had deteriorated overnight: she developed a fever, severe sweating, labored breathing, stridor, mucous congestion, and her head turned bright red. She had to be suctioned more frequently. We were told that she was not aware of her condition, that she was not feeling her labored breathing on account of the morphine. We very much hoped this was true, because from the outside, it appeared that everything was sheer effort and torture. On Saturday morning, one of the nurses increased her morphine dose. We were also told that, based on my mother's strong physical condition, it could take 2 to 3 days until her body would give out. None of us wanted this for her, and we hoped and prayed that she would be relieved sooner; if she had to go, please let her go quickly. Then, around 11:45 am, Ms. Seidenath, a sound massage practitioner arrived. A palliative care nurse had recommended this therapist the day prior, explaining that sound therapy might help, as dying patients could often let go sooner with this therapy. Initially, we were skeptical of this approach, wondering if our mother would have approved of this method if she were conscious or healthy???? Ultimately, we decided that it couldn't hurt, and if it would help, we would be grateful. Thus, with a calming radiance, Ms. Seidenath entered the room and, without much ado, placed 3 singing bowls on the bed around my mother. She asked me and my friend to remain in the room, but to step away from the bed a little to give her space to work. I can remember that she placed a large singing bowl at my mother's feet, and two smaller ones to the left and right of her head on the pillow. She then began to lightly tap the large singing bowl first, and then made her way to the bowls at my mother's head. In this manner, she continued to slowly tap the bowls in sequence, and a pleasant tone and calming atmosphere developed in the room. I believe it was already after just 2-3 minutes that I noticed that my mother's breathing became more relaxed, the redness vanished from her face, and her breathing became increasingly slower with long pauses in inspiration . . . fewer breaths, but deeper ones. Her face regained its normal color. I remember that I couldn't believe what I was seeing and looked inquisitively at my friend – was

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I imagining this or was it truly happening? She experienced the same thing and gave me a quizzical and surprised look. We now realized that the dying process had been initiated and my mother could go now, and now the process simply looked peaceful. The sweating and redness in her face subsided. In a little while, her pauses in breathing became increasingly longer, and it felt as though these were her last deep breaths. My mother's left eye opened slightly, and Ms. Seidenath indicated that I could go to my mother and close it. With a nod, I asked if I could hold my mother's hand and she affirmed I could do so. But as soon as I held her hand, my mother's strenuous breathing, as we had seen in the hours before, returned. Her face also began to turn slightly red again. To me, it was initially a shock and I felt guilty to have interrupted my mother's dying process with my closeness and holding of her hand. I hoped that Ms. Seidenath could reinitiate this process. Calmly, she continued the sound application and it did not take

long until my mother's breathing became more relaxed, and she could peacefully take her last breath. Now my mother laid in her bed relaxed, as though she was sleeping. It was 11:58 am. We sat there in astonishment, something unfathomable had happened, in that minute, it was like a small miracle. What had happened here, how could it be so visible and truly initiated with this sound therapy, and how could it happen so fast we asked ourselves in our thoughts? On the one hand, a tragically sad moment since our mother had left us forever. But thinking about her, it was also relieving that she had conquered her battle, as it appeared toward the end, and did not suffer for hours and days to come. We were and are eternally grateful to Ms. Seidenath for her loving and spontaneous help. She was a salvation, a saving angel for my mother and for us. And we are honored and thankful that we could be with our mother as she left this earth. With kind regards and heartfelt thanks to Ms. Seidenath, Family G.

I wish to extend special thanks to the daughter of Ms. G and the entire Family G for allowing me to take part in their mother's passing and allowing me to publish the personal account of this event.

Praise the Lord.

Gabi Seidenath



Gabriele Seidenath

is a specialized nurse for anesthesia and intensive as well as palliative care since 1994. She has worked in the Intensive Care Unit of the Helios Amper Clinic in Dachau since 2002. There, she has implemented sound therapy there with great success since 2011 and is a frequent speaker on "Sound Massages for Intensive Care Patients" at medical conferences. She is a guest docent at Fachakademie Schönbrunn (learning institution) where she teaches complementary methods for regular as well as intensive care and care for palliative patients.

As a natural health professional and practitioner of Peter Hess®- Sound Massage, she also works in her own practice in München-Schwabing. Furthermore, she teaches courses in preventative care for insurance companies.

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*... breathing
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Photo: Sandra Lorenz