Hospitals across the United States are holding honor walks to show respect to patients at the end of life who are donating organs to others.

The double doors of the surgical intensive care unit opened into a hallway crowded with dozens of hospital employees. A hospital bed emerged, and we all fell silent. Most beds roll out of the I.C.U. briskly, en route to radiology or an operating room, whirring with the beeps and blinks of monitors and the quick conversation of busy nurses. This bed was different. It moved at a stately pace, and the team that accompanied it was changed as well. Nurses steered, but there was no chitchat this time. A tall anesthesiologist leaned over the head of the bed to squeeze a bag valve oxygen mask with clocklike regularity.

People in street clothes trailed close behind the bed, unsure of where to look. These were the parents of the young woman in the bed, the one we had all come to honor. This was an “honor walk” for a dying patient about to donate her organs to others.

Whether in Idaho or Tennessee or Oregon, hospitals across the United States are holding honor walks as dignified ways to honor each patient’s final contribution.

With the consent of loved ones, and with the operating room ready for organ donation to begin, hospital leadership invites all staff members to participate. In my hospital, the University of Vermont Medical Center, the clothing in the crowd reflected the different jobs we’d been pulled away from. There were white coats and ties, crumpled blue scrubs, bouffant surgical hats and from: There were white coats and ties, crumpled

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Vermont Medical Center, the clothing in the crowd reflected the different jobs we’d been pulled away from. There were white coats and ties, crumpled blue scrubs, bouffant surgical hats and expensive pinstripe suits. A priest who wore a neon pink Hawaiian shirt over his clerical collar looked up and down the hallway and smiled.

The honor walk takes place at an odd pause between life and death. Either brain death has been declared already in a donor whose heart still beats, or the donor’s heart will soon stop beating. Whether in Idaho or Tennessee or Oregon, hospitals across the United States are holding honor walks as dignified ways to honor each patient’s final contribution.

I looked at the woman in the bed. Her eyes were closed. Her skin was sallow. She wore the usual hospital gown and identity bracelet. IV tubing and monitors and the quick conversation of busy nurses.

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