ANDREW MARR:
No alarmism sadly in the next story. These are stories that keep recurring: accounts of poor care and a lack of compassion in the health service. Worst was the scandal at mid-Staffordshire hospitals where hundreds of patients are thought to have died over the past few years due to poor care, but there are many others. This week one MP told the Prime Minister of her concerns based on the experience of her husband when he was dying in hospital.

FOOTAGE: ANN CLWYD IN HOUSE OF COMMONS ADDRESSING PRIME MINISTER:
Mr Speaker, a universal healthcare system free at the point of delivery is what the overwhelming majority of the British people want - something which I remain firmly committed to. However, there are increasing complaints about nurses who fail to show care and compassion to their patients. What exactly will the Prime Minister do about that?

ANDREW MARR:
Ann Clwyd, who you saw there, joins me now from our Cardiff studio. Ann Clwyd, you said that your husband was left to die like a battery hen in a cage, and it was clearly an utterly harrowing experience. You are a very long-term and experienced MP. What are you going to do about this? Are you going to start a new campaign for
more compassion in British hospitals?

ANN CLWYD:
Yes is the short answer. I’ve had hundreds and hundreds of emails from people from all over the country and the theme is the same. There are some good nurses, but there are also some very bad nurses and people have talked about their own experiences. One line from one of the emails: ‘I must agree with you, the nursing profession is no longer the caring profession. When I sat at my husband’s bedside, I did wonder just why some of the so-called nurses bothered to put on their uniforms. The arrogance and indifference of some left me bewildered.’ And just one other: ‘Since they made nursing a degree course, the wrong kind of people are entering the profession and they think they’re above the menial tasks that the old-fashioned nurses undertook from day one. We do not need a load of snooty-nosed pen pushers. We need compassionate nurses who are entering the profession because they care for people.’

ANDREW MARR:
Those are very powerful points and a lot of people will be thinking of course what happened to you utterly, utterly awful. But it was perhaps because you are an MP and able to raise it in the House of Commons in the way you did that we are now talking about it, so what do you think can be done to start to change the atmosphere in hospitals and in the profession?

ANN CLWYD:
Well this isn’t a new thing, Andrew. I was for three years on the Royal Commission on the National Health Service, the only royal commission we’ve had. It reported in 1979. It landed on the desk of Margaret Thatcher and very few of the recommendations were ever put in place. But some of the evidence that we had at that time on standards of care, we said … I dug up just a few quotes from the Royal Commission Report: ‘We received much evidence expressing concern about declining standards of nursing care. The RCN claim that standards have been put at risk because of financial constraints, increased workloads and manpower shortages.’ They submitted the main areas of risk were in hospitals and one of these of course I saw for myself …
ANDREW MARR:
Yes.

ANN CLWYD:
… neglect of basic nursing routines.

ANDREW MARR:
Yes. So I mean there are already some patient bodies who campaign on these sorts of issues, but for whatever reason they haven’t quite sort of achieved national prominence as a … Are you going to try and bring them together and create a new organisation? What’s your thinking?

ANN CLWYD:
Well obviously there are people who have been doing some work on this over a long period of time and I hope to get together next week, well this week, some of the organisations that have been campaigning to see how I can take it forward from there because you know the kind of response I’ve had from people all over the country and from other countries as well is amazing. And they’re not just one paragraph letters. They’re substantial - many of them documenting their own experience. But I was on a programme last week - and this is what I find amazing - and I met somebody who’s a freelance operator and he is being used by some hospitals to talk to the hospital staff about compassion and care. You know where did those principles go?

ANDREW MARR:
Alright, Ann Clwyd, thank you very much indeed for joining us this morning.

INTERVIEW ENDS