



David Mihigo, 57, and his daughters Helene and Angelique.

“KNOWING HE IS HAPPY AND CARED FOR MEANS EVERYTHING TO US”

I can hear my Dad's big booming laugh as soon as I come in to the Hospice! He is always raving about how much the nurses make him laugh. It wasn't always that way. My dad is often a serious man, but then, he has endured a lot, so it's been lovely to hear him laugh.

He was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2013. Although it had already metastasized to his bones, he was able to go about his daily life for two to three years, although he wasn't able to work as he maintained heavy machinery. It was hard, as there are only the three of us.

You see, Dad was forced to flee the war in Rwanda at the age of 40, and came to Ireland in 2003. For five years he was alone, separated from his entire family, and has never been able to go back. My sister Angelique and I stayed with my mother, but she sadly passed away two years later. We were brought to Ireland by UNICEF, under the Family Reunification Programme three years later. I was just 12 and my sister was 15 when we landed in Dublin airport in the middle of January. The first thing I saw was my dad, who I hadn't seen for five years, jumping the rope and running towards us!

He tells us that being cared for at the Hospice has been the best thing that's happened to us in many years. He has had to endure so much in his life, and that was one of the things he always instills in us – when things are difficult, you keep going and get through it.

When my Dad was diagnosed with cancer it was hard – the thought of losing him when he is all we had, and also the responsibility of caring for him, as my sister and I were still studying. We managed, but then when the pain became worse about two years ago, Dad was referred to the Hospice for out-patient services by his consultant.

He would come in one day a week for physio and use other facilities such as the jacuzzi therapy bath to help with his pain. He still loves the hot bubbles!

Over time he would occasionally be admitted for a week at a time to manage the pain better, and finally became an in-patient last November as he was no longer responding to treatment.

He has loved the Hospice. Compared to other healthcare facilities he has stayed in to give us respite, **he thinks the Hospice is like a 5* hotel! As well as the green surroundings, he has privacy and that allows us to be a family.** When Angelique and I were caring for him, all our attention was on his pain and health. Now that is so well taken care of by the wonderful staff, we get to be his daughters again.

My dad is a very strong man and worked so hard to look after my sister and me. He had to play the role of both mum and dad, and I think he did a really good job as I think we've turned out well! **The Hospice has given us such peace of mind and has made the difference to all of us as we face this time together.**

“It has been a wonderful experience, because everything is lovely. I give it ten out of ten,” Dad says! **“It's totally different because the staff here are able to spend time with me, and I feel reassured that they can come quickly if I am in pain, or am having trouble breathing.”**

It's a strange thing to say, but even walking in here, the welcoming energy feels so uplifting, unlike any other place he has been. **Knowing that he is happy and cared for means everything to us. The nurses even declared he was the King of the Hospice and made him a crown which he loves. It made him laugh so much.**

Although he is managing his pain and is tired, Dad wants to share his story so that other people will be able to have the same level of care and support. **“Any donation that you give is not money wasted because it helps people who are in such a difficult point in their lives; a time when there is not much joy, yet here there is joy,” Dad says. “It has saved the life I have left.”**

We know he is safe, we know he is being cared for, and we know he is happy. What more could you hope for?