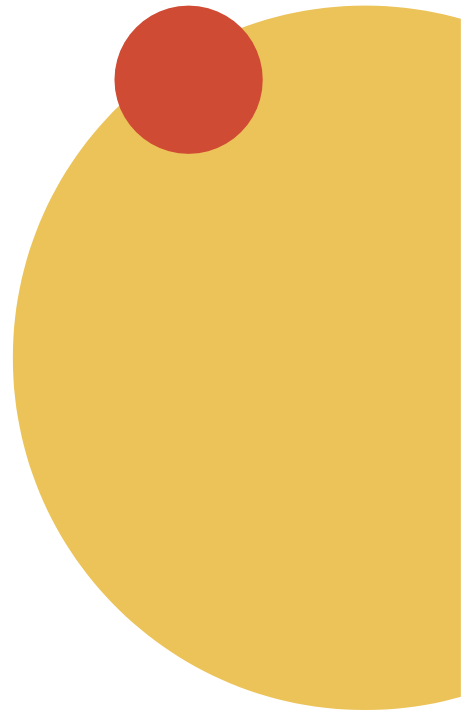




# Fundamental Role of the Arts and Humanities in Medical Education

## **Creativity in Times of Uncertainty**

AAMC collected over two hundred 55-word stories and poems that capture healthcare professionals' and trainees' experiences in the face of the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racial injustice in 2020-2021



# Creativity in Times of Uncertainty

In 2020 and 2021, in partnership with StoryCorps, The Good Listening Project, and the National Endowment for the Arts, the AAMC created a way for physicians, residents, and medical students to reflect on the uncertainty surrounding the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racial injustice.

Health professionals were asked to submit poetry or 55-word stories, to take part in a listening session from The Good Listening Project, or to conduct a video interview using StoryCorps tools. Over the XX months of this project, there were hundreds of contributions to this story sharing project. Some prevailing themes of these contributions were disconnection, hope and gratitude, and grief and loss.

The article ["Bearing Witness: Storytelling by Healthcare Professionals and Learners During Times of Uncertainty"](#) describes the project in more detail. In addition to the poetry and 55-word stories in this document, you can access submissions through The Good Listening Project's [podcast](#) and [books](#); and the [condensed](#) and [full-length versions](#) of videos housed in the Storycorps AAMC collection.

The AAMC wishes to express appreciation for the National Endowment for the Arts, who made this project possible, as well as for the healthcare staff and professionals who dedicated themselves to caring for others in the face of uncertainty. We extend our sympathies to all those who suffered and lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic and to racial injustice.

### **Are You OK?**

Minneapolis is eighty miles away, so these events literally hit close to home. As a black man, it can be uncommon for others to be concerned about my safety. Many of my colleagues asked how they can show solidarity. I am grateful for these bright lights during this dark moment in our country's history.

*Suliman EL-Amin  
Fellow  
Mayo Clinic  
August 31, 2021*

### **The Cry of My Heart**

Can you tell me how to grieve in a pandemic?  
Everyone is different; do self-care, they say.

But what if self-care is being with those I love?  
Whom I dearly loved I have lost.  
How could I risk bringing the virus to others beloved?  
I am grieving but cannot grieve.  
Because I love you.

*Tiffany M. Shin, MD  
Faculty Member  
July 29, 2021 – not on John's list but on website*

### **A Sad Eyed Woman**

A sad eyed woman speaks to an procession of hearers, who think their boredom is hidden by masks and goggles.  
Halting conversation is passed through a phone while minds wander.

A plan is made, and the dreaded final question asked.  
Is there anything else we can do for you today?  
"No, I'm fine." She wasn't.

*Kylan Larsen, MS  
Student  
July 29, 2021*

### **Dementia**

MY BRILLIANT, BEAUTIFUL,  
WIFE IS DISAPPEARING  
STRICKEN  
FRONTOTEMPORAL  
DEMENTIA  
NOW I AM ALONE, CAN I  
HELP OTHERS AND  
COMFORT?  
HOW CAN I CARE WHEN I  
AM ALONE?  
I NEED TO BE LOVED AS I  
WALK THE LONELY PATH  
TO MY DEATH  
HOPE GROWS  
I WILL FIND LOVE AGAIN  
ENERGY WILL RETURN  
I WILL HEAL OTHERS.

*Gerald Lazarus, MD  
Faculty Member  
June 22, 2021*

### **Partial Craniectomy**

Two weeks into the quarantine, and the teenager's recovering from a bout of bacterial meningitis he contracted before everything happened. He's finally doing better. "This feels normal now," the mother says, gesturing to the slender tubing snaking from his cranium. "I wish the rest of the world felt the same way."

*Gregory Plemmons  
Faculty Member  
Monroe Carell Jr. Children's  
Hospital at Vanderbilt  
March 4, 2021*

### **I See You**

I see you  
Trying your best to smile,  
hoping the news' not too bad.  
I see you  
Holding the phone so tight  
your knuckles blanch,  
anxiously waiting for me to get to the point.  
I see you  
Hear the test results, gasping  
in disappointment, then the sobbing. Quiet.  
I see you  
Because I'm human too.

*Evelyn Illori, PhD  
Student  
Case Western Reserve  
University  
March 4, 2021*

### **Have You Been Here Before?**

I ask the grey-haired white woman  
as she enters the clinic next to Dave's Mercado  
"No, I live across town," she mumbles through her mask  
She fumbles to roll up the sleeve of her beautiful red sweater  
"I'm a little nervous"  
Me too  
I think to myself  
before I jab her arm

*Nikki E. Rossetti, MS  
Student  
Case Western Reserve  
University School of Medicine  
March 4, 2021*

#### **Luis**

385,000+ dead.  
Suffocating grief.  
A lifetime in color now gray memories  
wondering when last they talked.  
Could he sense when her breathing stopped?  
For what are wildflowers without bees?  
What brings light to leafless trees?  
There is no Luis without June.  
And she is gone. So he left too.  
Forevermore. A numbing statistic.  
385,000+ dead.

*Lauren Moore  
Student  
TCU and UNTHSC School of Medicine  
February 5, 2021*

### **The Things I've Learned**

I've learned to smile with my eyes  
So they can see that I have a soul.  
I've learned that a moment of silence,  
A reflection of the things that we hold dear,  
Will allow us to proceed with purpose.  
I've learned we're more alike than we'd like to think.  
We all want to be loved.

*Miki Calderon  
Student  
February 5, 2021*

### **A Blessing in Disguise**

To pursue my dreams  
While evolving from old wounds  
To pursue my dreams  
While evolving from old wounds  
Stoics had known best  
Master loneliness they said  
The grace of being  
Forced to confront inner worlds  
For those in training  
Must learn to heal themselves too.

*Christina LaGamma  
Student  
Penn State College of Medicine  
February 5, 2021*

### **Sharing**

I catch her eye when she falters,  
brow furrowed beneath breath-blurred plastic goggles  
a pause at the sudden tears –

and then she wraps his inconsolable in white coat arms,  
navy spots blossoming on sky blue fabric  
– a reminder that pain can melt us together  
just as much as it pushes us apart.

*Haorui Sun, BS  
Student  
Pennsylvania State College of Medicine  
February 5, 2021*

### **June**

315,000+ dead.  
You yearn to escape unscathed  
as daylight erodes the bleakest night.  
Vaccines on the horizon met with a foreign feeling-  
Hope.  
But it is too late. She is gone.  
Empty promises of protection proved fallible because even wildflowers wilt in the sun.  
She died alone. A numbing statistic.  
315,000+ dead.

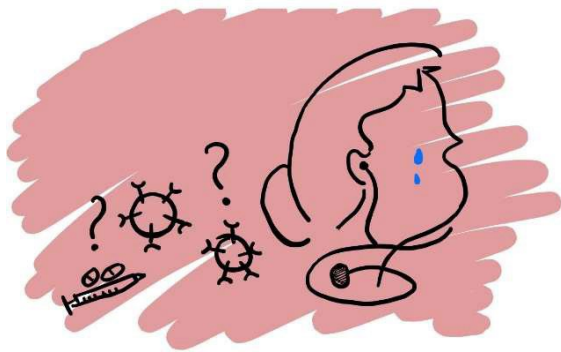
*Lauren Moore  
Student  
TCU and UNTHSC School of Medicine  
January 5, 2021*

### **Invisible Enemy**

From the shadows of healthcare, we rise. Now on the front stage.  
Science and planning on a moment's notice have collided...  
With a hidden enemy at our door, lives are lost in a battle of time.

Steadfast and determined,  
we will not fail.

*Jason Stalling, MBA  
Administrator  
Eastern Virginia Medical  
School  
January 5, 2021*



### Duty

I read about it  
Not sure if it can affect us  
Few days go by  
People now ask me  
I am supposed to know  
What it is  
How to prevent  
How to treat  
To be a frontliner  
Stop  
Take a breath  
It's ok to be scared  
But then,  
I have to move on and help.

*Niyati Grewal, MBBS  
Student  
Manipal College of Medical  
Sciences  
January 5, 2021*

### Who remembers to call the family?

Four hours after the surgery  
should have ended, my  
mother paced anxiously.  
"Should I call?" Not allowed

in the hospital, we received  
no updates during the  
procedure. "They'll call if  
something is wrong." "I don't  
want to annoy the doctors."  
Grandma was already in  
recovery, it turned out. No  
one had bothered to tell us.

*Allison Neeson, BS  
Student  
Tufts University School of  
Medicine  
January 5, 2021*

### Pandemic Yell

I've developed a new  
appreciation for my own  
voice – a scream so forceful  
it took me by surprise. I  
called it my "pandemic yell".  
I recorded it and listened to  
it over and over again. It was  
exhilarating to hear and feel  
the rage inside burst its way  
out finally. I made it my  
ringtone.

*Mimi Lam, DVM, CCFP,  
Dip.Path  
Faculty Member  
Harvard Medical School  
January 5, 2021*

### For Months

Four Months  
Watching charts, statistics,  
news commentators  
Wondering where my place  
was in this strange new  
world of  
Staying home, begging  
relatives to  
My first day back in the  
hospital  
Realizing the cost  
In fear, in loneliness, in too-  
early goodbyes  
But I know

With hope and courage  
We are finding brightness  
And brighter days ahead.

*Emily Marra, BA  
Student  
Case Western Reserve  
University School of Medicine  
January 5, 2021*

### A Month of Haikus

A new month begins,  
pandemia continues,  
I long for an end.  
Writer's block struggles,  
so I puzzle with haikus  
for poetry month.  
Disobedient  
dreams haunt my  
subconscious. I  
can't escape COVID.  
A month of haikus,  
finger counting syllables,  
what will mark days now?

*Trisha K. Paul  
Resident  
University of Minnesota  
January 4, 2021*

### **ICU Redux**

She looks the same, despite many years.  
Still young and still tired as she was in 2005, when I met her and her son.  
His story a tapestry weaving through so many ICU rooms since that day.  
Recognition hits us.  
She points out his “first” room.  
A sudden hug, ignoring masks.  
I don’t pull away.

*Wynne Morrison, MD, MBE  
Faculty Member  
Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia  
January 4, 2021*

### **Like Faded Denim**

Before she coded, I had told her she’d be okay.  
I can’t breathe, she said between heaves as the mask pushed the air in and pulled life out.  
I patted her shoulder, held her hand through her gasps.  
When the team started compressions her head tilted towards me, eyes wide in shock.  
They were blue.

*Andrew J Park, MD  
Resident  
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Harvard-Affiliated Emergency Medicine Residency  
January 4, 2021*

### **Family Time**

School is now virtual, her kids are always home  
Jobs are now uncertain, her livelihood a slippery prize  
They say quarantine, they say family time  
Her black eye and bruises, “just new make-up tricks mummy is trying out”  
She holds them tight, her tiny little kids  
Too young to already know the sounds of abuse

*Jane-Frances Aruma  
Student  
Penn State College of Medicine  
December 18, 2020*

### **Thank You Corona!**

You helped me realize life isn’t all about living nor death about dying.  
Every death is but a reminder of what I yet need to let die within me. And I die a little when someone else dies too to in let the new life while still alive.  
Your tough love made me more humane!

*Sailaja Devaguptapu  
Senior Research Officer  
Indian Institute of Health Management Research University  
December 18, 2020*

### **My Pandemic Baby**

She didn’t know she was being, born in a pandemic, a world where there would be no faces.  
Where smiles wont prevail.

Where handshakes will be scary, and hugs would be scarce.  
She only knew the warmth of the womb and, now here she was in this cold dark world.  
This cold dark world.

*Saba Fatima, MD  
Faculty Member  
Kansas University School of Medicine, Wichita  
December 18, 2020*

### **An Infectious War**

Cough, sneeze, sniffle.  
Everyone is suspicious. At the grocery store, the bank, the gym. COVID-19 is everywhere. Invisible but ever-present. Waiting to capitalize on the next victim.  
Respiratory droplets, aerosolized, on fomites.  
There’s no escape from this war. Masks, social distancing, hand washing – our only hopes. We are in this together. We must come together.

*Logan Garfield  
Student  
FIU Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine  
December 18, 2020*

### **Isolation**

Isolated in my room, I cannot leave  
Food and drink are brought to me  
My breath is infectious, I must wear a mask  
It’s getting lonely in here  
My dog cries outside my door

I feel sick, but the sadness of  
this isolation drowns that  
Three more days, one  
negative result  
Freedom is so near

*Amanda Rodriguez*  
*Student*  
*Florida International*  
*University Herbert Wertheim*  
*College of Medicine*  
*December 18, 2020*

### **Routine Morning**

At home, like always,  
hunched over my computer  
clicking through UWorld  
questions. Our dog curls  
around my feet to beg for  
attention and food. Voices  
drift over from my mom's  
phone—another day,  
another Zoom funeral. Which  
one?, I think, as I sweep my  
faceshield and mask into my  
bag for another clinic  
halfday.

*Chioma Ndukwe, MS3*  
*Student*  
*University of Illinois at*  
*Chicago*  
*December 18, 2020*

### **tik tok**

Tik. Tok.  
Each with a family.  
A parent. A child. A  
grandparent.  
Tik. tok.  
An aunt or uncle.  
A spouse. A sibling.  
Tik. tok.  
A friend.  
tik. tok.  
Every minute, someone dies.  
Not just a number, but a  
person.  
Tik. tok.

Each with their own story.  
A story cut short.

*Kaila Pomeranz, DO*  
*Attending*  
*Tampa, Florida*  
*December 18, 2020*

### **My first stroke patient**

"COVID-19, alone, intubated.  
Young Black Female,  
BLM protests outside.  
Significant anemia. Blood  
ordered post-procedure.  
I check on her. Sedation  
wearing off.  
I explain.  
She panics.  
"I never want blood!" she  
writes.  
"Why?" "Religious—  
Spiritual" I panic.  
RN, PRBC bag in hand.  
"No blood," I say.  
I alert MD.  
On rounds—  
"Thank you, Dara," she  
writes."

*Dara S. Farhadi, BS, MS*  
*Student*  
*University of Arizona College*  
*of Medicine-Phoenix*  
*December 18, 2020*

### **Patients of Color #1**

Brown like me  
Amir and Sarah bounced off  
the walls of the clinic. I  
smiled and showed them my  
stethoscope. Their dad just  
lost his job and with that  
went his health insurance.  
He was grateful for this free  
clinic. I was grateful he  
trusted me. They looked just  
like me and my brother when  
we were kids.

*Roshan Bransden, MS4*  
*Student*  
*FIU HWCOC*  
*November 11, 2020*

### **Patients of Color #2**

"Bad black mother"  
She's back again.  
It's her seventh child.  
She's positive for  
amphetamines, again.  
HIV positive, no prenatal  
care, no insurance.  
It's 2 a.m. The baby is 3  
months early.  
It's born — transferred to  
the NICU.  
Mom is discharged.  
"We'll see her again," my  
attending shrugs and turns to  
his computer.  
We all failed her.

*Roshan Bransden, MS4*  
*Student*  
*FIU HWCOC*  
*November 11, 2020*

### **Despair**

Fever, chest pain, shortness  
of breath. Death  
Shackles, choking, gasping.  
Death  
Centuries of invisible,  
invincible oppression  
A tale of contagion and two  
viruses  
For one- tests, treatments,  
vaccines, fueled by money  
For the other- words and  
more words, running on  
empty  
Change is coming.  
Change is coming.  
Change is coming today  
No change is coming

*Nasia Safdar, MD, PhD  
Faculty Member  
UW-Madison  
November 11, 2020*

### **Not what we know, new hope**

Focused in ED code stroke.  
Student standing nearby.  
Though busy and stressed, I  
called her over for short  
teaching. Both very  
appreciative. Students now  
not allowed. Not ignoring  
small opportunities with  
learners, family, friends that  
bring joy and purpose. May  
lose sight of true priorities  
while busy but don't know  
when won't have them  
anymore.

*Kristie Chu  
Fellow  
UT Health Science Center at  
Houston  
November 11, 2020*

### **Travel Ban**

"Mom, this is not your  
regular 77th birthday  
message.  
My upbringing, instilled with  
your trust, faith, and values; I  
treasure.  
We clash, but our  
relationship is strong and  
lasting;  
'vergeef me', when I hurt  
you.  
I need you to know how  
much I love you  
in case something happens,  
and I can't come home."

*J.M. Monica van de Ridder  
Faculty Member  
Michigan State University  
College of Human Medicine –  
Spectrum Health  
November 11, 2020*

### **White Enough**

"Well, we're just glad we  
switched to you as her PCP...  
Mom's last doc was too  
Middle Eastern."  
Wordlessly, I gesture to my  
name badge: five Arabic  
syllables next to my white-  
passing face.  
He shifts uncomfortably  
before leaning forward,  
determined to make a  
smooth recovery:  
"No, I mean he was like...  
Middle Eastern Middle  
Eastern."

*Samer Muallem  
Faculty Member  
Penn State Milton S. Hershey  
Medical Center  
November 11, 2020*

### **Danger in the Air**

We assemble.  
Respiratory therapist,  
Me  
Nurse  
He booms,  
"1!"  
Hold on...  
"2!"  
I still need to...  
"3!"  
And with our might  
our patient's face suddenly  
emerges.  
Tube disconnects  
Machine air abounds  
I hold my breath.  
In that moment we praise  
mask and shield.  
Before I can blink,  
our airy captain re-attaches  
the tube.  
I exhale.

*Chuma Obineme  
Fellow  
Emory University Hospital  
November 11, 2020*



### **The Reality of Stay at Home Orders**

He's ill, but cannot afford to miss work.  
He wants to quarantine for others' safety but can't survive without income.  
Your hands touch his. Now you're contaminated.  
It was easier to pass judgement on his lack of isolation when the virus was abstract.  
But now, you too, are vulnerable to its hardships.  
Now you understand.

*Rachel Fields  
Medical Student  
Florida International University Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine  
November 11, 2020*

### **From Sketchy to Bedside**

I had heard about coronavirus once prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. I was studying for Step 1 and was watching SketchyMicro. The "Kingdom of SARS" sketch opened with the narrator saying "Coronavirus, it's not a super high yield virus". If only the creators knew that this non-high yield virus would end up changing the world.

*Shilpa Ghatnekar  
Medical Student  
Tufts University School of Medicine  
November 11, 2020*

### **Uncertainty**

Who am I? Now and when I'm gone.

How have I lived? How will I die?  
Questions burning in my mind  
Ask my mom to let me go.  
This is not who I've chosen to be  
But who I was born to be  
Who I've grown to be  
Who I may die to be.

*Amanda Pensiero  
Faculty Member  
Lois Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center  
November 11, 2020*

### **Phone Calls Make me Angry and Tired**

An ex-wife hearing of imminent death. An interpreter conveys another failed spontaneous breathing trial. Again, a son and daughter ask why he cannot receive convalescent plasma. I lay awake hearing the words of a terrified husband- "you are my doctor, thank you". I prepare for another day's sorrow with an open heart and empty soul.

*Noah Rosenberg  
Medical Student  
NYU Grossman School of Medicine  
November 11, 2020*

### **Essential**

What keeps the essential workers essential?  
We the intra-helpers, the holders of space. Lovers of the unloved and unlovable.  
We

the givers of dream transfusions.  
Volunteer souls.  
Hope transplants.  
Social workers donning the same scrubs, the same masks, the same gear.  
Turning to look into the faces of fear looking into the faces of fear.

*Steven T. Licardi, LMSW  
Behavioral Health Clinician  
New River Valley Community Services  
November 11, 2020*

### **For The Culture**

2020 was supposed to be the year of manifestation.  
A pandemic shook the table and brought endless devastation.  
Tragedy took Kobe and Pop Smoke.  
COVID took my stepfather and the rest of my folk.  
As humans, we all matter.  
But all lives can't matter until black lives matter.

*Tilicea Henry  
Medical Student  
Penn State College of Medicine  
November 11, 2020*

### **Ingenuity**

He was tired and wanted to go home. This was his 14th hospitalization in 3 years. He wanted his wife, his bed and his food. We could always do more. He wanted less. The pandemic made everything uncertain. No one was wearing masks yet. But Mr C

did. Cancer might get him,  
but coronavirus wouldn't.

*R. Michelle Schmidt, MD,  
MPH  
Faculty Member  
Baylor College of Medicine  
November 11, 2020*

### **Secure unit dialectic**

Looming over her,  
Yellow gown, masked,  
Breath misting plastic, I  
barely hear:  
"I can't breathe".  
Intergenerational despair.  
"Can I have my clothes?"  
Crumpled on the mattress,  
tugging the  
Baby doll around her,  
"It's for safety", says the  
white nurse.  
Stripped of identity  
Like her ancestors.  
Isolation again.  
She hugs herself;  
No budget for kind words.

*Lisa Burback  
Academic Psychiatrist  
University of Alberta  
November 11, 2020*

### **Steel to Skin**

You were excited to see me.  
And I? Your knee.  
Propofol administered.  
You called me a king; pride  
for me was heavier than the  
shackles removed.  
I was envious.  
We did not differ too much.  
I have been on their treasure  
hunt for years.  
Hopefully, one day, I jump  
through enough hoops to  
find my keys.

*Jason Mascoe*

*Medical Student  
Penn State College of  
Medicine  
November 11, 2020*

### **2020: A Visionless Summer**

Summer solace in pandemic  
solitude.  
Are you okay?  
I just want you to know...  
I don't understand...  
Teach me.  
I don't want to be...  
BLM.  
Everyone is pr[a]ying.  
Different agenda, same  
power.  
I miss my underground  
freedom.  
This newfound love is  
suffocating me.  
Mask off. No more hiding...  
Yet, I still can't breathe.

*Jason Mascoe  
Medical Student  
Penn State College of  
Medicine  
November 11, 2020*

### **Earth-Shattering Career Obstacles**

We are sorry, you did not  
match to any position  
Tunnel vision, seasick, mute,  
colorless world.  
Pick up pieces, stand tall, and  
persevere.  
Covid-19 siphon energy,  
dissolve opportunity.  
Covid-19 deaths, screams,  
financial burden, social  
isolation.  
Covid-19 innovation, virtual  
togetherness, newfound  
unity.  
Develop dedication, enhance  
grit, broaden  
resourcefulness.

I am strong. We are COVID  
strong.

*Joseph Toth  
Medical Student  
Upstate Medical University  
November 11, 2020*

### **July 14, 2020: International Non-Binary People's Day**

I told them my name and  
preferred pronouns, they  
responded in kind.  
"Pleasure to meet you."  
They said they volunteered  
teaching medical students  
about pronouns  
And smiled saying, "I'm glad  
to see it's working."

"They are coming in to follow  
up on their chronic  
headaches." I presented to  
my attending.  
"What do you mean they?"

*Jason Spicher  
Medical Student  
Penn State College of  
Medicine  
November 11, 2020*

### **The First Patient**

Gasping, "Something's wrong  
.... lungs"  
Southern visitor to ER up  
North.  
Has COVID-19 arrived here?  
Frightened, don PPE, too  
late.  
Lips quiver behind N95  
masks.  
Family sent home to  
quarantine, intubated alone.  
Last words, "Thank you... for  
what you do..... I hope..... you  
will be OK"  
Great compassion. He fights  
but dies.

It's not OK.

*Alisa Hayes  
Faculty Member  
Medical College of Wisconsin  
November 11, 2020*

### **Act Now**

I Can't Breathe. Please Help.  
COVID-19 or police  
chokehold.  
Emergency Medicine  
doctors- we see it all. Rush to  
aid.  
Give oxygen, intubate, CT  
scan, medication?  
What can we do? Anything?  
Powerlessness.  
Coronavirus and systemic  
racism.  
We can witness, We can feel,  
We can give voice to our  
patients.  
Act with what energy and  
time remains.

*Alisa Hayes  
Faculty Member  
Medical College of Wisconsin  
November 11, 2020*

### **Touching patients in the time of COVID-19**

It has been opined (by  
Doctors Osler, Lipkin,  
Charon, Ofri, and even Dr.  
Oz) that the "laying on of  
hands" by the physician  
during a therapeutic  
encounter with a patient is  
critical for establishing  
rapport and promoting  
healing; the so-called Loving  
Touch.  
I am fearful that my elbow  
bumps are not up to the  
task.

*Jeffrey G. Wong, MD (Faculty  
Member)  
Faculty Member  
Penn State College of  
Medicine – University Park  
Regional Campus  
November 11, 2020*

### **The Wake Up Call**

The asylum tree whence fell  
Viands make, the sentry's  
woodpile sell  
The recrudescing baleful  
storms let rake  
Of the falsity refuge yet  
seeking, leccy make  
Unto the deific call, ever  
wake?  
The Self unto the self else  
forsake?  
The rolling fickle billow like,  
not rise and fall  
Heed thou ergo the prodding  
Parnassian wake-up call!

*Sailaja Devaguptapu  
Senior Researcher  
IIHMR University  
November 11, 2020*

### **Rinse and Repeat**

Wake up, get up, login, treat  
Hear their stories  
Uncertainty, oppression,  
chaos, defeat  
Fearful eyes, painful voices  
Gulping reality one sip at a  
time like scalding coffee  
Listen, support, find common  
ground  
Fatigue rising, shields  
engaging, boundaries setting  
Wake up, get up, login, treat

*Israel M. Labao, MD, MPH  
Resident  
University of Wisconsin-  
Madison  
November 3, 2020*

### **Pandemic**

Do you have a fever?  
No  
Do you have any shortness of  
breath or trouble breathing?  
No  
Do you have any changes in  
your taste or smell?  
No  
Do you have any symptoms  
you want to talk about?  
No  
Do you have any questions  
for me?  
My test came back positive,  
should I be worried?

*Jiajun Li  
Student  
Florida International  
University Herbert Wertheim  
College of Medicine  
November 3, 2020*

### **Masked**

The world had changed  
The masks I only used to see  
in the hospital  
Are now commonplace in  
public  
Everyone thinks so much is  
hidden behind the mask  
But from experience, I know  
It's not as different as it  
seems  
I can see still their smiles in  
their eyes

*Jiajun Li  
Student  
Florida International  
University Herbert Wertheim  
College of Medicine  
November 3, 2020*

### **Virtual Connections**

Apart but still together

These connections already exist  
We were just afraid to try something different  
until there is no alternative  
Some say there's no replacement for the face-to-face  
Some say the connection is weak  
Not real, as its name would imply  
But it turns out  
Sometimes, an imitation  
a Virtual connection is good enough

*Jiajun Li  
Student  
Florida International  
University Herbert Wertheim  
College of Medicine  
November 3, 2020*

### **This is Recovery**

"Most people recover" they say  
"This virus is no big deal."  
I see recovered COVID patients everyday; heart failure, kidney failure, liver injury, pulmonary embolisms.  
Do people know?  
That this is recovery.  
I drive home past packed restaurants and bars.  
The hospital is full. So where will these people go when they are recovering?

*Amanda F. Tompkins  
Medical Student  
University of Colorado School of Medicine  
November 3, 2020*

### **The Masks We Wear**

We all wear masks in this office.

Some are made from cloth, others woven from experience.  
The patient's experiences of discrimination, desperation and dismissal  
casting his face in fear.  
The physician's experiences of listening, ignoring, and rejecting  
hardening her face in false empathy.  
My experience as powerless witness  
painting my face in a silent scream.

*Rebecca Allen  
Medical Student  
University of Arizona College of Medicine - Tucson  
November 3, 2020*

### **The Song and The Breath**

Breath bestows a voice to song,  
But song was in the air,  
Then captured by the wings  
That beat as long as they could bear.  
As beauty is carried in body,  
So song is carried in breath;  
In time, when breath has ceased then, know  
The song has already left.

*Alexander Thomas  
Medical Student  
Sidney Kimmel Medical College  
November 3, 2020*

### **Happiness Reset 2020**

Vacation "Home" for vacation,  
Working in, for, and from "home."  
Cooking added dopamine in dishes,

Cleaning is a new mindfulness.  
"Zoom" is a new craving,  
"Facetime" with family and friends is my free CBT,  
"Old Fashioned" "New Yorker" "Netflix" are chips of micro-happiness,  
Ongoing systole for hedonic treadmill  
is now replaced with COVIDiastole.  
"COVID" is a "Midas touch."

*Vijay Rajput  
Faculty Member  
Nova Southeastern  
University, Dr. Kiran C. Patel  
College of Allopathic Medicine  
November 3, 2020*

### **Day After Day After Day**

Up before dawn  
Head strong  
The weight of a heavy coat  
Upon her shoulders  
The weight of daily suffering  
Entrenched in her heart  
Peeling away layers  
Exposes deeply etched scars  
Left behind by this life of service  
The head knows it's true  
The heart pretends it will pass  
The scars tell a different story

*Kimberley Williamson  
Registered Nurse  
UWHealth  
November 3, 2020*

### **Boston Hope Music**

When the pandemic struck,  
we were stopped in our tracks. Is music still relevant?  
Are the arts still relevant?

Then the melodies began flowing again. Music is never silenced. We played together again to bring wellness to Covid patients and to restore wellness in ourselves. A way of healing, giving back, restoring our disrupted world.

Lisa Wong  
Faculty Member  
Harvard Medical School  
November 3, 2020

### **Unsettled Entrance**

March 2020 was a cold and uneasy time. We arrived to the hospital with no one in the hallways, only a screener to greet us on the frontlines. "Do you have any fever, cough, or shortness of breath?" No symptoms, sir. "Any contacts with someone with COVID19?" I don't know, we do not have testing.

Juliette Perzhinsky, MD, MSc  
Faculty Member  
Central Michigan University  
College of Medicine  
November 3, 2020

### **My Frontline**

I don't work in the ER.  
Nor in the ICU.  
The traditional "COVID frontline,"  
displayed on CNN,  
is not my daily experience.  
January was routine medication checks.  
March became crisis management,  
keeping stable depression and paranoia

in a depressed and paranoid pandemic.  
I don't work on traditional "frontlines,"  
but  
mental health frontlines hurt too.

Marissa Flaherty, MD  
Faculty Member  
University of Maryland  
School of Medicine  
November 3, 2020

### **What Am I Missing?**

Why do your lungs still look like this? Why does your heart still race like this? What am I missing? Who are you behind these closed eyes? How do I prepare your family for the cries? What am I missing? I see you every day yet feel you drifting further away. What am I missing?

Elena Zamora  
Resident  
UT Houston  
November 3, 2020

### **In The Shadow of the Pandemic**

Diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, cancer.  
Think of disease, what comes to mind?  
In Pandemics, we are forced to ration access to care.  
With masks and protective equipment, we combat a virus.  
But has this increased vigilance, made us partially blind.  
A scourge still overlooked by society,

Substance use disorder, so many still suffering and dying.

Rebecca Hamburger  
Student  
Kultaj Kaleka, RN  
Faculty Member  
Juliette Perzhinsky, MD, MSc  
Faculty Member  
Central Michigan University  
College of Medicine  
November 3, 2020

### **The Veteran's Wife**

On worn waiting room chairs, I held her thin, papery hand- gold band secured between arthritic knots. "No, you can't stay with him. No visitors." Isolation, protocol, pandemic- excuses that could not excuse tearing apart the decades of tucked midnight embraces. Milky halos encompassing the blueness of her eyes. A blink, a departure, alone.

Rebecca Tuttle, MD, MS  
Faculty Member  
Portland VA Medical Center  
November 3, 2020

### **Presentation**

I have no idea,  
It could be,  
It is most likely,  
Presentation is most consistent with.  
You could have,  
You might have,  
You are at risk for,  
You are diagnosed with.  
We suggest,  
We recommend,  
We will order,  
We prescribed.

Anything else I can help you with,  
Do you have any questions...  
How are you?

*Hannah Mulvey Ferrera  
Medical Student  
Emory University School of Medicine  
November 3, 2020*

### **First day of school**

The box arrives after dark.  
Parts eagerly scattered  
across the floor. Fat black  
cushions. Gyrating legs. So  
many classic plastic wheels.  
Calling it an office chair is  
unimaginative. A throne?  
Facetious. A saddle,  
perhaps? Screws twisted.  
Joints locked. A lovingly  
assembled new home. I  
climb in and spin around,  
ready for the long journey  
ahead.

*Benjamin French  
Medical Student  
Emory University School of Medicine  
November 3, 2020*

### **One in a Million**

POSITIVE.  
A lightening bolt in my  
electronic health record.  
Covid – still early, we know  
so little.  
Masked, scrubbed, extra  
cautious.  
Quarantine.  
Temperature checks.  
Symptom monitoring.  
Worrying about exposed  
family.  
Daily Health Department  
check-ins

The national numbers have  
reached one million.  
Days pass, my birthday in  
quarantine  
My daughter sends a cake.  
I celebrate being okay.

*Karen Szauter  
Administrator  
University of Texas Medical  
Branch  
November 3, 2020*

### **A Brief Reminder**

“I’m a fighter,” she says,  
blisters across expanses of  
skin, like the illness is trying  
to climb its way out.  
“Remember this: surround  
yourself with the right  
people. Because I didn’t.”  
Later, I stand on my balcony,  
alone. My hands are full,  
people I love available at the  
swipe of a finger. The world  
spins.

*Jennifer Li  
Medical Student  
Emory University School of Medicine  
November 3, 2020*

### **The Hoax**

Stone-faced and somber, the  
new patient sat behind the  
partition with an untrusting  
glare. “Are you scared I’m  
gonna choke you?” “No sir,  
just trying to keep us both  
safe from the virus”. “Oh,  
that hoax everyone keeps  
talking about”? One side of  
his mouth curls upwards in  
amusement. Just another  
day in forensic psychiatry.

*Scott Leary, MS4  
Medical Student*

*Florida International  
University Herbert Wertheim  
College of Medicine  
October 29, 2020*



### **When Bees Swarm**

We can no longer stay here.  
It is not right.  
Being treated by a different  
standard for bringing my  
own PPE.  
But I want to protect myself,  
my patients, and my family.  
Am I really doing wrong by  
advocating during a  
pandemic?  
I want to fly with my swarm,  
but where are they?

*Juliette Perzhinsky, MD, MSc  
Faculty Member  
Central Michigan University  
College of Medicine  
October 29, 2020*

### **Auscultation**

An unexpected gift,  
inadvertent sounds from  
unmuted classmates—  
rhythms like palpitations as a  
car drives past his window,  
a quiet voice asks what time  
she’d like dinner,  
the stuttering of a chair  
pulled closer to the table,  
fluttering of flipped pages,  
skittering steps of pets;

the small intimacies of our  
virtuality

*Elizabeth Jakubowski  
Medical Student  
Wayne State University  
School of Medicine  
October 29, 2020*

### **Back to work**

"You must be frontline"  
With guilt  
"I am doing televisits for  
now"  
The hospital is eerie and  
quiet outside  
Once inside  
You forget  
Residents crowd together  
Affording comfort  
And normalcy  
You stand close to an upset  
father  
To explain and assuage  
On your way home  
You are haunted by his  
maskless face

*Madhura Pradhan, MD  
Faculty Member  
The Children's Hospital of  
Philadelphia  
October 29, 2020*

### **Can You See It?**

We give each other  
company, Fear and I  
Sometimes in the absence of  
others,  
Sometimes in a room so full,  
you cannot see your own  
feet  
Fear can take a lifetime to  
wrangle away  
But one moment, one  
instance  
Leaves us vulnerable to  
Fear's claws

Claws sunk so deep, you feel  
them with every breath.

*Nikitha Pothireddy  
Medical Student  
University of Iowa Carver  
College of Medicine  
October 29, 2020*

### **Fever**

She can't stay seated, fake  
lashes concealing tears.  
Her husband is at home due  
to the pandemic restrictions.  
Oh, my baby, she screams,  
aerosolizing her grief into the  
room.  
The diagnosis slowly bruises  
her mind like leukemia into  
her son's body.  
He's our youngest. He still  
sleeps with us.  
She wishes he had COVID-19  
instead.

*Benjamin Drum  
Resident  
University of Utah  
October 29, 2020*

### **Flexed to Inpatient**

I cut my nails to the quick  
that night. God forbid my  
body betray me or my family,  
virus somewhere I couldn't  
scrub clean. The morning:  
first COVID patient, ICU  
transfer, her survival a  
blessing, her gratitude  
shattering. Remembering my  
oath, I leaned stethoscope  
close, listened, touched.  
Finally—home. Scalding  
shower. Called kids; dinner  
alone.

*Sarah L. Clever, MD, MS,  
FACP  
Faculty Member*

*Johns Hopkins School of  
Medicine  
October 29, 2020*

### **Medical School in the COVID era**

I wake up at 7:45. I shower  
while listening to two Teddy-  
Afro songs. I get dressed. I  
quickly type in the password  
to my computer and pull up  
my zoom. I yawn, sip my  
instant coffee, and glance  
over at the picture of me and  
my mom. I smile and turn on  
my camera.

*Maranatha Genet  
Medical Student  
Emory University School of  
Medicine  
October 29, 2020*

### **July Intern**

We're a month in, but I still  
don't really know any of you.  
"These people will become  
your family," I'm told over  
and over. To be fair, I haven't  
gotten to see my actual  
family outside of video chats,  
either, so maybe it's still  
true.  
The top one-third of your  
faces seem very kind,  
though.

*Hannah R. Dischinger  
Resident  
October 29, 2020*

### **Class of 2021**

I am ready.  
I have passed my exams and  
performed well in the core  
clerkships.

I am motivated, young,  
healthy.  
Put me to work. I can help.  
But I am stuck at home.  
Useless.  
Quarantined with my  
knowledge and experience.  
Mere months from finishing  
my training.  
We are an untapped  
resource and we are ready.

*Rachel Fields*  
*Medical Student*  
*Florida International*  
*University Herbert Wertheim*  
*College of Medicine*  
*October 29, 2020*

### **Responsibilities**

I have a child, husband,  
elderly parents, job.  
Work with colleagues,  
residents, students, and  
COVID.  
Busy days...lots of  
responsibilities.  
No more vacations, no more  
school.  
Now fear of infection is the  
reality.  
Now fear of infecting my  
family is the reality.  
Have to stay healthy,  
optimistic, strong.  
I am a mother, wife,  
daughter, and doctor.

*Doris Lin*  
*Faculty Member*  
*Baylor College of Medicine*  
*October 29, 2020*

### **COVID19 Musings as Haiku**

1. Science non grata  
Lack of trust cuts deeper  
now How did we get here? 2.  
Not doing enough Colleagues  
suffer, I am spared Guilt  
laced tears fall down 3. Fear

of the unknown Waiting,  
hoping all will clear Calm  
before the storm 4. Quiet  
clinic rooms Missing  
laughter, hugs, and smiles  
New normal too still

*Nicole Kucine*  
*Faculty Member*  
*Weill Cornell Medicine*  
*October 29, 2020*

### **Manifested Worry**

Her pupils widen at his  
radiant coat,  
And body winces at devices  
dangling about his throat.  
Showing demeanor of an  
impending escape or brawl,  
I'm sure her perspiration is  
mostly cortisol.  
As previous traumas amplify  
current fears,  
The only diagnostic tools he  
can rely upon are his ears.

*Rachel Roy*  
*Medical Student*  
*Penn State College of*  
*Medicine*  
*October 29, 2020*

### **Coronavirus through the eyes of a 7-year old**

How hard it is to stay home.  
I think about how we are all  
participating and doing the  
right thing. I appreciate that  
lots of peoples lives will be  
saved in hospitals because of  
you. Don't you ever wish that  
coronavirus wasn't here and  
that there were no viruses in  
the world?  
Can you imagine that?

*Lauren Fine, MD Faculty*  
*Member in collaboration*  
*with Emma Fine*

*Nova Southeastern*  
*University*  
*October 29, 2020*

### **One Step at a Time in NYC**

Unwound, we were and still  
are unraveling. In many  
ways, we feel paralyzed in  
March forever.  
There's a fire burning in the  
distance. What has  
happened to my city? Try to  
stare at the screen. Distant  
sirens ring. Just try to focus.  
A three digit score can give  
you the world- what's left of  
it.

*Zoha Huda*  
*Medical Student*  
*CUNY School of Medicine*  
*October 28, 2020*

### **Connection heals**

These days you understand  
me more than before  
We long for the loved ones  
who we're not able to see  
We worry for them  
We look tired in the  
mornings, wondering all  
night how next day will be  
But everyday your warm  
thoughts melt my plastic  
costume  
So happy to see each other  
again

*Dana Giza*  
*Fellow*  
*UT Health Houston*  
*October 28, 2020*

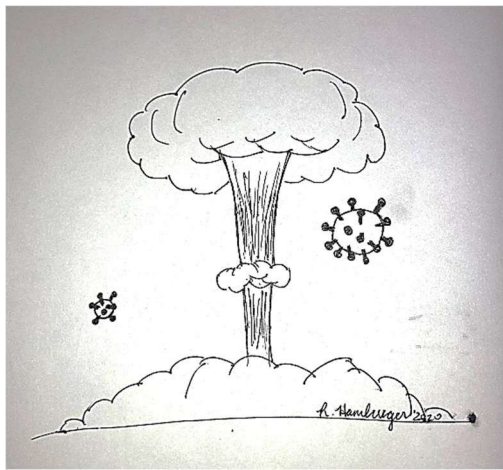
### **ZoomMed: A Place to Meet New Friends?**

Zoom. Botched audio,  
reactions delayed. The way



“genuine” connections start these days.  
Pre-med, curly hair, Atlanta – the topics of discussion. 1.5 hours, I realized I’d found a good person.  
A person who’s genuine, kind, and shares quite a few interests of mine.  
A person whose friendship I could see standing the test of time.

*Sydni Williams*  
Medical Student  
Emory School of Medicine  
October 28, 2020



### **Eyewitness to detonation**

We were both wearing masks when I evaluated you—a 90-something year-old WWII veteran. You were only 20 serving in an airborne bombing squad. What was it like to be a witness to the first nuclear bomb to detonate in war? You heartrendingly shared that the fallout killed many and this COVID19 pandemic felt similar.

*Juliette Perzhinsky, MD, MSc,*  
Faculty Member  
*Rebecca Hamburger*

*Medical Student*  
Central Michigan University  
College of Medicine  
October 28, 2020

### **Sacrifices**

I could list each sacrifice made studying medicine on my fingers. Late studying, lesser parties, fewer friends. Now, I watch professionals self-isolate in garages. Others explain quitting. A mentor describes sinophobic experiences. My mother recovers to alleviate her coworkers’ burden. Friends attend morning funerals online, studying at night. Sacrifice is too messy for one finger.

*Shubhi Singh*  
Medical Student  
CUNY School of Medicine  
October 28, 2020

### **Here – An Ode to Parenting the “OTHER”**

We are the bread of Evolution, Creation and The Divine.  
Generations before us, molded this For-Ever-ness of Us. Thriving, excelling, and flourishing. We Breathe. Carving Tomorrows. Creating Flourish. For those who come after Us.  
“Here. We are still. Here.”

*Adwoa Osei, MD FAAP*  
Faculty Member  
University of California,  
Riverside  
October 28, 2020

### **The Time for Family**

My daughter just turned one. She likes to play pull-the-mask-off-mommy’s-face. We stayed home from March to June, took clerkships online, sat for boards, got a puppy, read a lot of Winnie-the-Pooh and Goodnight Moon. I became essential. I got what I longed for – family, and a course in courage, reflection, and how-to-be-a-Mom.

*Laura Jorgenson*  
Medical Student  
University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria  
October 28, 2020

### **Distance**

Distance from each other... But are we distant from the invisible virus? Fighting a battle with an enemy with a new guise. Will medical knowledge and technology change the course THIS time? In the end, will this new enemy change the way of being... Or maybe through these perils, we will understand our own essence.

*Nivedita Thakur, MD*  
Faculty Member  
McGovern Medical School/UT Health  
October 28, 2020

### **Out of One’s Mind**

My grandfather calls my father for the third time. He does not remember the previous calls. He’s scared and doesn’t know why he is

in the nursing home, even though this has been his home for the past year. He thinks the staff is keeping something from him. He thinks he may have the virus.

*Olivia A Murray  
Medical Student  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
October 28, 2020*

### **ALL THE MEN**

... who said she couldn't:  
Survive medical school:  
"you're not a good test-taker"  
Obtain a fellowship: "must have 'connections' "  
Direct a program: "young, inexperienced"  
Run a board meeting: "you don't know enough"  
...who cheered her on:  
Holding her son, husband's hand on her back, her father's words remembered:  
"You're a strong woman".

*Taraneh Soleymani, MD  
Faculty Member  
Penn State Hershey Medical Center  
October 28, 2020*

It was 1987  
It's 2020  
I was a medical student  
I'm a medical student  
I was in an epicenter  
I am in an epicenter  
HIV  
COVID-19  
There was no cure  
There is no cure  
My people were dying  
My people are dying  
I am scared for my daughter.  
I am hopeful because of my father.

### **Father and Daughter**

It was 1987  
It's 2020  
I was a medical student  
I'm a medical student  
I was in an epicenter  
I am in an epicenter  
HIV  
COVID-19  
There was no cure  
There is no cure  
My people are dying  
My people are dying  
I am scared for my daughter.  
I am hopeful because of my father.

*Carrie Crook  
Medical Student in collaboration with Dr. Errol Crook  
Tulane University School of Medicine  
October 28, 2020*

### **Working Remotely....Month 5**

It's Monday morning and I must attend another Zoom conference of multiple heads on a monitor. Some participants don't use video. Disrespectful? Bad WiFi? Not Dressed? Eating breakfast? Opportunity for multitasking? What's the best way to engage remotely? On-line polling or breakout rooms? I feel desperate for a real connection, I need a hug.

*Kathleen Nelson  
Administrator  
Keck School of Medicine of USC  
October 28, 2020*

### **The Beauty of a Shared Moment**

"The treatment isn't working anymore" I say.  
"That's quite alright." she says.  
"Would you like to see the chaplain?"  
"Later." A tear runs down her cheek. "Can you pray with me?"  
I've never been religious, but I sit down, hold her hand, close my eyes and let the peace silence brings wash over us.

*Onyebuchi Okeke  
Medical Student  
Emory University School of Medicine  
October 28, 2020  
**Tissue?***

My patient who can't speak can't have her husband visit. Her kidney is failing. She started to cry. I couldn't give her a hug. Between glasses, masks, a shield, I'm part of a faceless team. A tissue passed between gloved hands serves as empathy. Who gets used to this? I don't know that I can.

*Jennifer Ferrante  
Medical Student  
University of Miami Miller School of Medicine  
October 28, 2020*

### **The Advising Dean**

I cannot wipe your tears on Zoom or place my hand on your shoulders as you tell me about the death. If I was in

your presence, I would not be able to come by your side. I can only comfort you with my voice and teach you what I know about life and medicine.

*Gauri Agarwal*  
*Administrator*  
*University of Miami Miller School of Medicine*  
*October 28, 2020*

**Med-student Do not Forget:  
The Strength of our  
Physician Formation**

Butterfly= Physician  
Chrysalis= Formation  
It was dark inside, harsh noises outside.  
Strong winds—a hurricane—stealing my breath away, depriving the light of tomorrow.  
It is my time, time to get out. A droplet reflects my wings, Are they broken or are they stronger?  
I take a jump and soar high; I learn and fight.

*Vivian V. Altiery De Jesús,*  
*MBE*  
*Medical Student*  
*UPR-SOM*  
*October 28, 2020*

**Quiet**

His wife takes notes with shaky hands." Kidneys – stable; cancer – progressing."  
"I don't want you to be in intensive care unit again." I don't want it either.  
"Consider hospice?" Six months later, a letter: "We appreciated your patience, your counsel, your gentle manner, the e-messages

after hours. "It is too quiet around here without Randy."

*Gurwant Kaur*  
*Faculty Member*  
*Penn State Health Hershey Medical Center*  
*October 28, 2020*

**Swan**

I think she's Punjabi Rare around here Chatting after the appointment I've missed this connection She asks for my name again Last name, too? I give it Faced with her confusion, I repeat myself She doesn't understand Realize I'm pronouncing it like I'm white, not Indian I correct, try to explain Have I forgotten myself?

*Anmol Hans*  
*Medical Student*  
*Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine*  
*October 28, 2020*

**Outreach to Whom**

Hello. Hello, it's strange. Visits over the phone. Ok. We haven't talked since it started. The children? Trying their best. I understand. Must be difficult. A lot of changes. Yes. Too many changes. And you? Safe. I hope you are as well. That's why I'm calling. And my breathing is getting better.

*Ann Lee*  
*Faculty Member*  
*University of Alberta*  
*October 27, 2020*

**For Once**

For Once, I take a Moment for our nature. To see stories unspoken Behind smiling eyes. To finally forget The lip's wasted language and other luxuries. For once I find myself In meditation Observing human harmony Within the realm of discord. For once I take a moment for myself To take in the natural world.

*John Newman*  
*Medical Student*  
*Emory University School of Medicine*  
*October 27, 2020*

**The N95**

Words escape in muffled unintelligible sounds with breath that's puffed and pushed to pluck some meaning from the noise. Then sucking hard to find the oxygen inside the small blue crown that sits upon my lips and stains my cheeks with pain in service to my lungs to stop the silent plague from getting in.

*Elizabeth Mitchell*  
*Faculty Member*  
*Boston Medical Center*  
*October 27, 2020*

**Hero**

Called a "Hero" While just doing my job... The career I chose, Before chaos stroke. If I had just been that hero, To make it all stop, Hopelessness wouldn't have robbed, Who this pandemic longed for. I was no hero after all. I just fulfilled the

vow I vowed: To help  
others... At what cost?

*Rosa Lizeth Frias  
Medical Student  
San Juan Bautista School of  
Medicine  
October 27, 2020*

### **Clinic is more confusing**

Unmasked in my office  
behind a closed door, I still  
feel safe. Beyond, into the  
aerosol wedged between us  
doctoring has become risky.  
Physical examination is now  
dangerous. Your masked  
fears and mine behind a  
faceshield, attend carefully  
to your story. What is your  
illness? Is it the new one? Or  
one we knew before?

*Lara Ronan  
Faculty Member  
Dartmouth Hitchcock  
October 26, 2020*

### **Rise**

She lies in bed, chest rising  
and falling, Her breath the  
sound of sweeping Through  
glass shards. On her window  
the patter Of rain overlies a  
scene of budding Leaves  
along the Huron. This is how  
they pass. In isolation. The  
white gown A forerunner to  
the shroud. The last breaths  
turbulent Before ascension.

*Natalie Ailene Moreno  
Medical Student  
University of Michigan  
Medical School  
October 22, 2020*

### **You Can't Be Here**

I'm sorry You can't be by  
your loved one's side You  
can't be here The virus looms  
here You can't give one last  
touch You can't give one last  
kiss You will have to just  
watch As breath slows, the  
heart slows Then stops You  
can't be here The Virus  
looms here.

*Stephen Paul Wood  
Administrator  
Carney Hospital  
October 22, 2020*

### **First Step in a Pandemic**

Familiar blue and white  
screen. Blocks and  
explanations that stopped  
connecting one pandemic  
ago. Inside is turmoil but  
outside is pure chaos. Do  
questions or ask questions of  
the world? Why weren't we  
prepared, why are my people  
dying or, what causes clots to  
form? Will I get these  
answers now or after the  
MD?

*Azana Newman  
Medical Student  
CUNY School of Medicine  
October 22, 2020*

### **Birdsong**

Alone. Days, weeks, months.  
Intimate familiarity with  
architecture. Waking up to a  
repeat sing song, "I'm  
scared, I'm scared, I'm  
scared." Is that bird chirping  
my anxieties? A world-wide  
panic attack. We are all alone  
together. Memories lay  
down on new moments and  
time becomes a thing to

ponder. Weeks, months,  
years. Alone?

*Chase Crossno  
Faculty Member  
TCU UNTHSC School of  
Medicine  
October 22, 2020*

### **Cry**

Death, everywhere. In NY,  
my home, in the hospital, the  
world. I cry for the losses:  
weddings, birthdays, family,  
life. I cry for the people who  
choose to doubt instead of  
support. As if we chose this  
field not to help but to make  
political statements. I cry for  
patients: scared, confused,  
sick. I cry.

*Danielle Cirillo  
Resident  
Rhode Island Hospital  
October 22, 2020*

### **Chaos and Confusion in a Pandemic**

How does it spread? How  
can I stay safe? Am I  
infected? Was I exposed?  
Will I recover? Stay 6 feet  
apart. Stay 3 feet apart.  
Those asymptomatic can't  
spread the infection. On  
second thought, yes, they  
can. We wait, we experience,  
we try to learn, but yet, still  
none of us know the  
answers.

*Rachel Fields  
Medical Student  
Florida International  
University Herbert Wertheim  
College of Medicine*

October 22, 2020



### **July Attending 2020**

July Attending 2020  
Now with mask and face shield but no patient interactions for five months, are these newly minted third year medical students ready for clerkships? Am I ready? Imprinting: watch me closely but not too closely. Grow and be yourselves. I pray, let the enthusiasm for the profession persist in these young minds and hearts.

*Rebecca R. Pauly, MD*  
*Faculty Member*  
*Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine*  
*October 21, 2020*

### **COVID Storm**

Prospects darkened pre-pandemic. Foggy thoughts clouded the brilliant mind. Weathered hurricanes that came with destructive fury but did depart. Exempted by age. Isolated for safety. Exhausted by the marathon. Surrounded with gale-force pressures. Tasks demanded. Teams prepared. Would a hug have squeezed out the insidious inside? Social distance maintained.

Thunderous goodbye. Yet, unheard. COVID slain.

*Anonymous*  
*Baylor College of Medicine*  
*October 21, 2020*

### **COVID-Exacerbated**

Purposelessness  
March 13: Another waitlist. March 15: Lockdown tomorrow. Grocery store trip. March 16: Unemployed. March 22: Offering to reschedule your wedding. May 6: Wedding... is... postponed. No acceptances... No job... June 2: Off the waitlist! June 5: Zoom courthouse wedding! June 6: Cross-country move! July 15: Welcome to MS1!

*Anonymous*  
*Pennsylvania State University*  
*October 21, 2020*

### **Telehealth**

Poke a hole in the sky, now  
On air in mid-air, Words  
warped by the warp. Vexing  
window, I should be grateful  
For such sci-fi conjury. Do  
what I can with invisible  
hands. In a viral environ,  
Reins far-flung up close. On a  
phlegmatic circuit, We look  
through the tunnel, The  
simulacrum of healing.

*Michael Stephen Miller, MD*  
*Faculty Member*  
*University of Texas Medical Branch*  
*October 21, 2020*

### **Student doctors and more**

“Only” student doctors,  
always overseen. Gained  
confidence from clerkships,  
no longer green. But – “only”  
student doctors – and pulled  
from hospitals. Look back on  
your journey! We’re not so  
brittle. PPE donated,  
contacts traced, patients  
screened. Though not in the  
hospital, we have done this  
and more, After all, we are  
student doctors And more.

*David Gao*  
*Medical Student*  
*University of Illinois*  
*October 21, 2020*

### **It – Is – The Tenderness — In Tough Times**

It is tender hearted – brigade  
of nurses From upstate –  
arriving downstate, Bearing  
their families’ state of mind:  
Go and serve, We bear your  
absence here – With your  
presence there.

*John F. DeCarlo*  
*Faculty Member*  
*Hofstra University*  
*October 21, 2020*

### **Where Do We Seek Refuge Now?**

1998: Hiding in the attic.  
“Shhhh,” Baba whispered.  
“No refugees here,”  
Jordanian police said. 1999:  
Mama said “America where  
people are free and safe”  
accepted us. 2020:  
Pandemic. Despair. Racism.  
7,791 miles. Iraq to America.  
Still not enough to escape  
injustice. White coat hangs,  
symbolizing the force that

preserves life, instead of destroying it.

*Shams Nassir  
Medical Student  
University of Arizona College  
of Medicine- Tucson  
October 21, 2020*

### **No One Untouched**

"You need to come now." I hang up the phone having just shattered Sam's life and forty year marriage. He blames himself. If only he'd seen her at the nursing facility he would have known something was wrong sooner. But the virus kept him away. A death not due to COVID, but tainted by it.

*Jennifer Caputo-Seidler  
Faculty Member  
University of South Florida  
October 21, 2020*

### **False Advertisement**

Never ending war, repression of basic human rights, and scarce quality education pushed my family to leave our home and risk imprisonment and the dangers of human trafficking. The US beckoned with abundant opportunities from across the Atlantic, masking the reality that it will always reduce me to the color of my skin first.

*Daniom Teclé  
Medical Student  
University of Arizona -  
College of Medicine (Tucson)  
October 21, 2020*

### **Virtually Impossible Grief**

My intern and I stand with an iPad to facetime the family - too far away, with travel restrictions. The grandmother starts to keen at the sight of her boy. He is too still now, fixed and dilated, only ventilator breaths. "He cannot be that!" broken English, broken hearts, broken composure and we all weep together.

*Katherine Mason  
Faculty Member  
Hasbro Children's Hospital  
October 21, 2020*



### **Making Do**

Making Do  
A duckbill mask filled with the pale blue remnants of what were once elastic straps. Through punched holes, I weave thin strips of Coban and tie ugly little knots. My hair twists mutinously around these new, cumbersome straps. I swear I hear the sickly snap of each breaking strand. I never liked arts and crafts.

*Nina Lemieux  
Medical Student  
Dell Medical School*

*October 21, 2020*

### **Patient – from Latin for “one who suffers”**

Can't remember his name or surgery. Multiple pages about his irritated eyes. Internal bleeding patient took priority. Hours later I make it to his room. He looked at me through his eye watering. "I'm alright, Doc. I don't have pain. But if you could give me something for my eye, I sure would appreciate it."

*Mike M Mallah  
Resident  
Carolinas Medical Center  
October 21, 2020*

### **It Happens, Even in a Pandemic**

We were two friends starting off our very first rotation. She is white and I am Indian, which made the difference. The questions started immediately. "But where are you from?" "Are you Dr. Ahmed's daughter?" "Love your tan skin." Though they were harmless, my friend never got these comments. It happens, even in a pandemic.

*Meha Shah  
Medical Student  
University of Arizona -  
Tucson  
October 21, 2020*

### **Despairing Monotony**

For me, the allure of an Infectious Diseases career was twofold: the somewhat

guilty thrill of the differential diagnosis, paired with and mitigated by the fact that cure was typically within grasp. COVID-19 robbed me of these gratifications: diagnostic mystery and the capacity to heal. Practicing during the pandemic has been a dreadful, despairing monotony.

*Emily Abdoler  
Faculty Member  
University of Michigan  
Medical School  
October 21, 2020*

### **A Story Erased**

Their dream was medicine, but it was not easy. They failed and tried again multiple times. The feeling that came with their success was immeasurable. All the sleepless nights, the stress, sacrifices, and hard work paid off. Then they hear “its easier for you because of your ethnicity.” Just like that, their story was erased.

*Sanga Shir  
Medical Student  
University of Arizona College  
of Medicine- Tucson  
October 21, 2020*

### **Caught Useless**

Seventy-something, Italian immigrant, dementia. In the COVID pandemic, there are no activities, nothing open. He worsens. Me, a soon-to-be medical student, but the lack of an MD degree stings. I cannot help my grandfather, nor dying COVID patients. If I spent a year convincing

schools I am qualified, then why do I feel so useless?

*Anonymous  
Stanford University  
October 21, 2020*

### **Providing Comfort**

Hair cap, N95, surgical face mask, face shield. My daily armor I smile, but they cannot see. My eyes are all that are available No family, no friends allowed; they are alone and afraid. Compassion and love From my soul, through my touch and my eyes I hope to provide.

*Kavita Shah  
Faculty Member  
Baylor St Lukes Medical  
Center  
October 21, 2020*

### **A Smile is Worth a Thousand Words**

Good news is a breath of fresh air A smile long gone, one can finally wear Radiation complete Baby can finally eat Smoking – finally quit Can walk again instead of sit The mask that protects, also hides The greatest emotion we feel inside Joy – a contagion free of harm Hidden now – replaced with alarm.

*Maria Shields  
Medical Student  
University of Louisville School  
of Medicine  
October 21, 2020*

### **Consult & Console**

“Tell me about your pain?” The tears fell. I expected the story of the left lower quadrant pain, which had brought her in. “My mother, she broke her hip and she’s all alone.” For a moment, I thought of my list of post-ops, the night already gone. I pulled up a chair, “Tell me more.”

*Chidinma S. Tiko-Okoye  
Resident  
Lankenau Medical Center  
October 14, 2020*

### **Pandemic Hero**

Her voice crackled on the phone. “Sounds like hero stuff to me.” It was embarrassing to explain that all I really do is assemble PPE and study in my room; sidelined while real doctors risk themselves on COVID wards. Medical students rarely feel useful, but now we’re reminded of it every day on the news.

*Jacob Hartman-Kenzler  
Medical Student  
Virginia Tech Carilion School  
of Medicine  
October 14, 2020*

### **The Wave on My Run**

I ran along the dusty road, To escape the loneliness and pain untold. Toward the old woman sitting on the porch I plodded, She became my beacon given what life had allotted. A stranger she remains in every sense except one, Everyday



without knowing it she saves me, with a simple wave on my run.

*Anonymous  
Warwick Medical School  
October 14, 2020*

### **Orientation “Zoom”-ing By**

In silence, scrolling through “gallery view” to make friends. In person meetings create a 10-person community but it’s more than spotty online connections can do. “This ain’t college” and it certainly doesn’t feel like it. The upcoming unknown feels overwhelming but I am reassured that I’m not the only one who feels this way.

*Sarah Gold  
Medical Student  
Emory University School of Medicine  
October 14, 2020*

### **Withdrawal of Accreditation**

Close the program. Voluntary? Hardly. Inevitable. Yes. Told residents. Told faculty. We mourned. Saved the best for last said residents. End of an era said faculty. We planned a celebration. COVID-19. Black Lives Matter. We shifted attention to more important issues. Turned off the lights and closed the door. Silent goodbye. No we. Only me.

*Lisa Gilmer  
Faculty Member  
University of Kansas School of Medicine*

*October 14, 2020*

### **Our Reflections**

The fall and rise, breathing holds no lies I see you suffer, you think you are tougher This disease is new to us, you have lost your trust I want you to believe in our guidance and care, can we meet there? If you refuse, you perish, your loved ones you will fail to cherish.

*Anitha Chandran  
Resident  
Florida Atlantic University  
October 14, 2020*

### **There Was A Day**

There was a day when life felt warm; serene and calm, Perhaps foretold of an approaching storm, Then there is today, like a shadowy squall, As life dissipated into a helpless yowl, But there is always tomorrow, unseen but felt Of hope and love, far but near, Like a story of history and time itself.

*Hamza Ali Lodhi  
Fellow  
Florida Atlantic University  
October 14, 2020*

### **The wrong patient**

Chart review: 82 y/o female with multiple cancer relapses and a poor prognosis. “I married my high school love sixty years back. We travelled, raised kids and are blessed with great-grandkids. I have had a wonderful life ” She started treatment before I was even born. I wondered

if I was with the wrong patient.

*Roshan Chudal  
Resident  
Louis A. Faillace, MD,  
Department of Psychiatry  
and Behavioral Sciences at  
McGovern Medical School  
October 14, 2020*

### **Post-COVID Clinic**

“So you’re who I have to blame for my hoarseness?” said my former ICU patient. “But you were REALLY really sick...” In that moment, you understood: your eyes filled with tears and gratitude, as did mine, and we were two doctors both crying over Zoom as we stared at each other, thankful to be alive.

*Lekshmi Santhosh  
Faculty Member  
University of California-San Francisco  
October 14, 2020*



### **Adapting**

Our family Moved cross-country to start medical school. All day I learn science and humanities So that I won't lose my humanity When my future patients need it most. My wife, Pregnant, nauseated, Isolated from old friends by distance And from new friends by COVID-19, Somehow cares for our son without me. No regrets. Grateful.

*Zachary Jensen  
Medical Student  
Penn State College of Medicine  
October 12, 2020*



### **Love in the time of Corona**

Love in the time of Corona  
The wedding was canceled. A package came from my mom – two masks, one white with lace, one black with a bowtie. We asked our Medicine program director to marry us on the nearby

bridge. We walked down the street, our families in our pockets, our dog replacing the bridal party. It was wonderful.

*Sarah Rhoads  
Resident  
Brown  
October 12, 2020*

### **Body Language**

Back at the hospital, finally. It has been months. Everything is different. I no longer see mouths or facial expressions due to masks- only eyes. I struggle to connect with my patients and colleagues. No encouraging smiles. No handshakes. No intimate gestures of comfort. I feel inept when stripped of using body language in medicine.

*Rachel Fields  
Medical Student  
Florida International  
University Herbert Wertheim  
College of Medicine  
October 12, 2020*

### **A Wandering Smile**

My smile wanders, searching for a way past my polypropylene mask to you from my eyes to your eyes through a plane of plastic from my hand to your hand through a layer of latex buzzing by my vocal cords to reach your empty ears in small words floating through the filtered air between us.

*Vishesh Jain  
Resident  
Santa Clara Valley Medical  
Center*

*October 12, 2020*

### **Mental Health**

A chair and a desk In the basement of my home. Isolation, fear, uncertainty. A light and a chime From the screen of my computer doubt, nervousness, anxiety. A laugh and a voice Fills the air in my room. Resilience, hope, reverie. Notes and drawings Sprawled across my desk. Excitement, zeal, fervency. Connection can heal.

*Peter Vollbrecht  
Faculty Member  
Western Michigan University  
Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine  
October 12, 2020*

### **Pressing Pause**

Commitment to heal and serve others, in their most vulnerable moments of life. We earnestly swore. Years of studies, hoping knowledge would save. Mastering the art of physical exam. Healing through touch. Yet faced with pandemic, we are discouraged to touch. Sent home. Knowledge paused. Unable to heal. The irony: Student doctors shielded from disease.

*Hanna Knauss  
Medical Student  
University of Toledo College of Medicine and Life Sciences  
October 9, 2020*

### **Sacrifice**

Spend my days taking care of sick patients. Exposing myself. As a result, I'm radioactive. When I need care, I fail the screening questionnaire. Any known exposures? Yes. Lots. My appointment delayed. Once, twice, three times. Doctor and nurse won't come near me. Testing delayed. Diagnosis delayed. Caring for others, at the expense of myself.

*Anonymous*  
*University of Texas Dell Medical School October 9, 2020*

### **Masked connections**

Connections with patients form the foundation of trust That connection used to evolve from a smile or gentle touch Now, I smile at patients, forgetting that the smile is hidden behind my mask I look into their eyes and see their fears and hopes We continue on and make new connections through all the uncertainty.

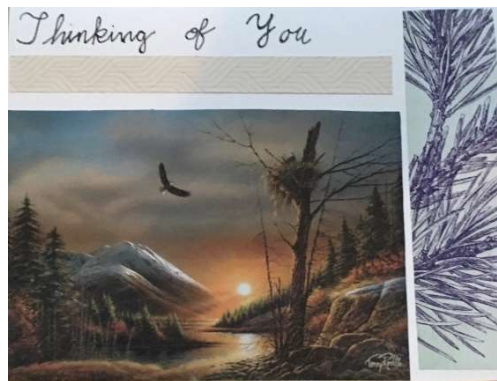
*Eleny Romanos-Sirakis*  
*Faculty Member*  
*Staten Island University Hospital Northwell Health*  
*October 9, 2020*

### **Together Apart**

Our eyes now smile for our mouths that have lost the privilege. They pierce through the tension engendered by collective fear to remind us that we are

still human, and that we still have the propensity to love one another. Our eyes protect us by bringing us together, while keeping us apart.

*Mika Mintz*  
*Medical Student*  
*University of Miami Miller School of Medicine*  
*October 9, 2020*



### **Gratefulness**

Gratefulness  
Our crisis wears on And life still creates challenges New and old to all I know what I've kept I see what others have lost Hardships, they abound You are on my mind My heart goes out to you all who give in these times Thank you for everything you do.

*Fatima Chagani*  
*Medical Student*  
*University of Miami Miller School of Medicine*  
*October 9, 2020*

### **Safe breathing spaces**

We are hunkered down afraid to breathe Looking for hope Within this long night We lost a lot Fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers,

Husbands, wives Alas children too Let us fight for rights Of those vulnerable Let us equalize the breath Give a gift of safe breathing space For colors of the heart are the same.

*Manveen Saluja, MD*  
*Faculty Member*  
*Aetna -CVS ,Wayne State University and Oakland University school of Medicine*  
*October 9, 2020*

### **Misfortune Rising**

Balancing on tightrope Rural America and inner-city staring me down Death haunting those I love Lack of hospitals- grim reaper looming Family casualties in the war of inequality and racism New threat of COVID-19- misinformation rising The first medical degree- potential savior A long path-bringing awareness hopefully home.

*Evelyn Darden*  
*Medical Student*  
*Penn State College of Medicine*  
*October 9, 2020*

### **Video visit**

I tell her she has a rare cancer. My voice is shaky. She laughs. She says, "Why me? Why not me?" We laugh together. She doesn't cry. I would have cried with her if she did. I couldn't have handed her a tissue if she did. it's a video visit. I can't hold her hands.

*Zehra Tosur  
Faculty Member  
Baylor College of Medicine  
October 9, 2020*

### **Optics, plastics, and haptic**

Filtered breath escapes between my mask and nose, fogging shield, yet I clearly see your worried brow. Cloth and plastic muffle voices, disguise faces, lips cannot hide smiling eyes. I would grasp your warm hands with my inevitably cold ones, tactile sensate Gloved must do haptics muted by clammy nitrile cannot dull a healing touch.

*Lealani Mae Acosta,  
MD, MPH  
Faculty Member  
Vanderbilt University  
Medical Center  
October 9, 2020*

### **Visiting**

Ms. J cried, then apologized for crying. After surgery, I worried about her. It was mid-March. I didn't know what was safe. But she was afraid, so I visited her. She told me, "It's too much." I listened. I kept my distance. I

worried about the breath that carried my words. Still, this felt essential.

*Sharada Narayan  
Medical Student  
UC Berkeley-UCSF Joint  
Medical Program  
October 9, 2020*

### **Regret**

Social distancing kept me from noticing how sick you had become. Our 15 year routine of Sunday dinner, became limited to FaceTime and grocery drop offs, where you toughened up so that I wouldn't be concerned.

Now, as you reach your final days, I think that maybe you should have been my bubble buddy.

*Annie Wood  
Administrator  
OHSU Family Medicine  
October 9, 2020*



### **Vermont Spring**

Vermont Spring  
A Vermont lake cabin reserved for childhood weekends suddenly became our home for three months. My fiancée and I arrived in early March, early enough to watch the spring ice melt.

We cancelled our forthcoming wedding, baked



sourdough bread, and warily, perhaps idyllically, welcomed a new, inexplicable world.

*Andrew Catomeris  
Medical Student  
Georgetown University  
School of Medicine  
October 6, 2020*

### **A hand to hold**

Ever since COVID, my patients have been scared and alone. No measure of facetime will suffice in exchange for physical presence of family and friends at bedside. That's why it's ever more important these days for us doctors to offer a kind word of encouragement and a hand to hold.

*Julian Swanson  
Faculty Member  
Baylor College of Medicine  
September 8, 2020*

### **Finding Color in the Darkness**

Finding Color in the Darkness Knitting has always been my companion; in COVID, we grew closer. She brought purpose to my hands when touch was no longer an option. She made me feel useful as the world crumbled and roused parts of my brain through creativity. Together, we discovered what could be as yarn unraveled and color returned from darkness.

*Judith Brenner  
Administrator  
Donald and Barbara Zucker  
School of Medicine at  
Hofstra/Northwell  
September 4, 2020*

### **Moving Pieces**

His days are long at sixty, As they have always been. His eyes closed briefly between cases When the adrenaline fades. His cough is better now. My time is still consumed by Books and flashcards and Mock patient encounters, But I'm coming, Dad. I'll be there soon.

*Winston Whiting Oliver  
Medical Student  
SUNY Upstate Medical  
University  
September 4, 2020*

### **Heal**

Emotions have been everywhere. Students care and want to see patients. Residents want to experience the pandemic upfront. We must let them. We must support them. We

must protect them. We must keep ourselves whole. We must let patients see our hearts and imagine our faces. We must breathe. We must teach. We must heal.

*Regina Macatangay, MD  
Faculty Member  
University of Maryland  
School of Medicine  
September 4, 2020*

### **Into the Unknown**

She'd only let her phone ring once before she excitedly answered. "Hi, honey! How's work?" "We had our first COVID patient today." She sat down, silently. "It's bad." He paused. "Don't...come home tonight. Just stay at your mom's for now." "Until when?" "Until it's over." "But when is that?" "...I don't know." He whispered.

*Estelle Vu  
Medical Student  
Penn State College of  
Medicine  
September 4, 2020*

### **My Bias**

Black, purple sweatpants and sneakers, and scruffy beard, in the ER. His phone rings, "that's my song" he asserts. Eyes roll, yeah right. "I need to be discharged to receive my Grammy" he proclaims. Eyes roll, yeah right. My bias, almost missed conversing with a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee and Grammy winner.

*Douglas Ander  
Faculty Member*

*Emory University  
September 4, 2020*

### **The gift of touch, through PPE**

Sick teen, dialysis. Went to tell her mother: 'no changes'. She told me the loss of an infant prepared her for this child's diagnosis, and another daughter's. Four months 'cancer-free' before relapse. Grateful for 'the talk' ... "it was OK to die". I listened, thanked her. Through PPE, I touched her shoulder: "see you tomorrow". Tears.

*Don Batisky, MD  
Faculty Member  
Emory University School of  
Medicine  
September 1, 2020*

### **Shumard Oaks**

Breaking through societal imposed expectations, statistics, and reignited resentment. Proceeding through a heightened awareness of what Mr. Roth would refer to as The Human Stain. I rebuke self-imposed limitations. My mind is durable, my will is tenacious, and my humanity will serve all the same.

*Vanessa Vides  
Medical Student  
Penn State College of  
Medicine  
September 1, 2020*

### **A Double Toxic Kiss**

Days after both feeling sick. "You might want to get

checked." "Checked for what?" "I'm at urgent care- nose swabbed and blood drawn." "Wait there- I'm coming." He arrives and gets tested. "Where's my kiss?" Kisses me rather hesitantly. Nurse comes over with my results. "Reactive." "For!?" "...M. Pneumonia." We patiently wait. ".....mine says nonreactive."

*Tiffany Rebecca Sánchez  
Medical Student  
San Juan Bautista School of Medicine  
September 1, 2020*

### **Local epidemiology, not in the news?**

Cars arrive on the block, parking closer than 6 feet. Visitors carry toddlers, glass containers for potluck next door. BBQ smokes, tempting aromas aerosolize. As people cross the exposed lawn, I see smiles, not masks. My phone pings again, irritating. Alerts for each new positive SARS-CoV-2. They keep coming. My neighbors do not hear.

*Kathleen Julian, MD  
Faculty Member  
Penn State Hershey Medical Center  
September 1, 2020*

### **A Good-bye**

Your wan face appears on my screen. Disappears. A voice I don't know says something I can't make out. You re-appear. You are small amongst white sheets and blue tubes. Silent amongst beeps and alarms. Still

amongst calamity. The heat of your skin after gardening on a sun-scorched day or making love- a distant memory.

*Nan Barbas  
Faculty Member  
Michigan Medicine and University of Michigan Medical School  
September 1, 2020*

### **What lay ahead**

Social distancing isolated him, and left him time to think, A window into what might wait for him after retirement. To avoid his future, his pain, led him to drink, And so he came to us. We removed his shroud. He stepped from our hands to the care of others. We stood together, fighting despair.

*Philip Brown  
Medical Student  
University of Texas Southwestern  
September 1, 2020*

### **Patient Care**

"There's no heartbeat", she says. Not again. Numbly trudge back to work to face another day. First patient: "Been praying for you every day. You pregnant yet?" I burst into tears. Very professional. An ample, yet firm, gentle, yet strict grandmother of 11, she gives me the only comfort I'll feel today. A mother's hug.

*Eliana Hempel*

*Faculty Member  
Penn State Health  
September 1, 2020*

### **Quite the med school ride**

Med school, such an incredibly hard endeavor for it's subjects. Imagine starting your first semester just to have a hurricane blow by in September and wreck your island. Couple of years later get a 6.4 magnitude earthquake followed by the COVID-19 a couple of months later. WE WILL PREVAIL!

*Jaime A. Roman  
Medical Student  
Ponce Health Sciences University  
August 31, 2020*

### **Quarantine Stitches**

Quarantine breeds stress  
Anxiety builds Thoughts race,  
water runs, dishes soak, the  
cassoulet breaks Blood  
between thumb and index  
finger pools Stitches needed  
Left arm raised high Call the  
PCP, stay calm They'll see me  
Thankful for community-  
based-care, my kind DO  
Asked what I needed,  
listened and validated all the  
feelings.

*Ali Smolinski  
Administrator  
Penn State College of Medicine  
August 31, 2020*

### **Retrospection**

Falling leaves approaching  
dusk and old photographs  
make me cry. Unshed tears



the limited time pills large  
and small constrict my  
throat. Precious moments  
fugues in time halcyon days  
swim before my eyes. The  
touch of your hands hope in  
your eyes the smile on your  
face are all I need to go on.

*Ananya Das*  
*Research Proposal Specialist*  
*Penn State Health, Milton S.*  
*Hershey Medical Center*  
*August 31, 2020*

**“Everything will be ok” is  
not the answer to  
everything**

“Why dad doesn’t wanna  
wear a mask? I told him to!  
He doesn’t care!” —says the  
boy, while pulling the beanie  
down to his nose, drying his  
tears. “Does he wanna die of  
COVID and not be with me?”  
My first Tuesday’s Children  
at the Psychiatric Clinic. I was  
wearing a colorful ribbon as  
requested.

*Angélica Nieves-Rivera*  
*Medical Student*  
*Ponce Health Sciences*  
*University*  
*August 28, 2020*

**Clerkship Interrupted**

My lifeless whitecoat hangs  
on the door, Safe to say it’s  
needed no more. TikTok,  
Netflix, and long walks,  
Sometimes it’s nice when the  
TV just talks. Sitting and  
waiting for the pandemic to  
be done, I wonder if the virus  
has already won.

*Max Trojano*  
*Medical Student*

*Penn State College of*  
*Medicine*  
*August 27, 2020*

**The Quake and the Virus**

A year earlier, no one would  
have believed you; that  
Puerto Rico would live  
through two major  
earthquakes and a pandemic  
in the span of 5 months. Yet,  
here we are. The  
psychological and financial  
impact of the earthquakes  
was worsened by the  
pandemic. Nevertheless, we  
as medical students continue  
to prepare for tomorrow.

*Ramon Mislá David*  
*Medical Student*  
*Ponce Health Sciences*  
*University*  
*August 26, 2020*

**When Being Safe Doesn’t  
Mean Being Free**

Often felt helpless as a  
doctor. Hopeless, too. Par for  
the course. Unrestrained  
virus isn’t affecting me,  
though. Watching friends  
and family on the front lines,  
exposed, vulnerable. This is  
devastating me. The guilt  
feels quite heavy. Should I  
seek out ways to help? Or do  
I indulge in the lack of  
personal risk?

*Gabriel Sarah, MD*  
*Faculty Member*  
*University of California, San*  
*Francisco*  
*August 26, 2020*

**Protected**

I examine my patients, masks  
slung under noses. A toddler  
sneezes on me. I change my  
scrubs. My blue paper mask  
is a week old. My patient’s  
father has an N95. He sleeps  
in it alone in their private  
room. Every visitor masked  
properly. I catch myself  
staring enviously, maybe  
angrily. Then, I am ashamed.

*Heather Edward*  
*Resident*  
*The Warren Alpert Medical*  
*School of Brown*  
*University/Hasbro Children’s*  
*Hospital*  
*August 26, 2020*

**The Transformation**

A once bustling unit  
transformed. All patients  
were moved. Short-lived  
quiet set in, Broken by the  
construction crew, Adding  
monitors, exhaust fans to the  
windows. Would this be  
another COVID ICU?  
Overnight every bed would  
be occupied. This process  
repeated day after day,  
Spreading throughout the  
hospital like a virus. Tears  
flowed. Back to work.

*Steven J. Sperber, MD*  
*Faculty Member*  
*Hackensack Meridian School*  
*of Medicine and Hackensack*  
*University Medical Center*  
*August 9, 2020*

**She is a nurse too**

Gloved hand caresses her  
head, grey-white hair soaked  
with sweat She looks at me,

fearful, breathing strained A  
mask shields my worry My  
face should not be the last  
she would see She slips into  
sleep Intubated Hang fluids,  
give pressors, change the  
vent Googles fogging, I'm  
now sweat-drenched She is a  
nurse too

*Stephen Paul Wood  
Administrator  
Carney Hospital  
August 9, 2020*

### **Sickle No More**

She presented with another  
Sickle Cell Crisis, day before  
her 22nd birthday. My first  
patient as an intern. Bilateral  
leg ulcers visible to the eye.  
Tulips delivered from her  
twin brother the night  
before. Intravenous fluids,  
Dilaudid, and Oxygen.  
Morning rounds, code called.  
Compressions performed,  
unsuccessful. Beautiful  
peacefulness in her eyes,  
flowers at her bedside.

*Stephen Henderson  
Faculty Member  
Penn State Health-Hershey  
Medical Center  
August 9, 2020*

### **Blank Stare**

Eyes wide open unable to  
look away from the world  
furiously unraveling. We  
began this journey to help,  
now we sit still, idling.  
Incapable of offering our  
untried hands; we grieve the  
loss of opportunity. When  
again will we look into a  
patient's eyes? Until then,  
we stare blankly at the

computer screen, our  
pedagogue.

*Shelby Henry  
Medical Student  
University of Alberta  
August 9, 2020*

### **Sole Soul**

For my patient, I act as their  
loved one. Standing vigil  
outside a glass door, holding  
their hand in my gloved  
palms, watching over them  
behind googles and mask.  
For loved ones, I am the sole  
soul standing between their  
family member and the dark  
cloak of Death who paces the  
halls watching in turn.

*Sara Journeyay  
Resident  
Tufts Medical Center  
August 9, 2020*

### **Solitary confinement**

Donning PPE, my gloved  
hand on his shoulder, "Sir,  
you have coronavirus." He  
didn't move. His foot  
handcuffed to bedrail. His  
dad died last week from the  
virus. Didn't see him. Didn't  
make the funeral. "Doc, my  
cellie kept coughing. No way  
to keep us 6 feet apart. No  
masks. No cleaning supplies."  
Solitary confinement.

*Priti Dangayach  
Faculty Member  
Baylor College of Medicine  
August 9, 2020*

### **Unexpected Goodbye**

It came out of nowhere  
when you left; It was crime,

it was theft. Your time was  
short but your legacy long,  
We will celebrate your life in  
dance and song. I can't say  
I've struggled like you; But I  
can say I've been low too.  
Your pain was unique; But  
peace, we all seek.

*Onyebuchi Okeke  
Medical Student  
Emory University School of  
Medicine  
August 9, 2020*

### **Untitled**

I wake up. Put on a mask.  
Can't breathe. We sit with  
white coats and laptops,  
discussing patients with  
hours left. My patient grabs  
my hand. "It's okay, I'm not  
afraid. I know where I'm  
going." Tennis ball in my  
throat. Can't breathe. Pager  
beeps: "Need you to declare  
time of death." No more  
breath.

*Mikaela Katz  
Resident  
University of Oklahoma  
Health Sciences Center  
August 9, 2020*



### The Storm

The Storm  
Like an encroaching storm,  
COVID-19 gains momentum.  
An ominous sky foreshadows  
masked isolation and death.  
Discontented winds sweep  
the land. The burden of racial  
injustice saturates the dark  
clouds, erupting in pelting  
rain, each drop stinging  
wherever it lands. Hailstones  
of racial violence add  
destruction to the deluge.  
Will a rainbow follow this  
national maelstrom?

*Michael P. Flanagan, MD  
Faculty Member  
Penn State College of  
Medicine August 9, 2020*

### Like Stars

Like stars we shine and burn  
Like a noble army of white  
coats In eternal defense of  
the earth from the moon.  
Armed with any number of  
antidotes To save all but  
ourselves. For we are not  
immune. Like stars we shine  
and burn And burn out.

*Matt Tsai  
Medical Student  
Larner College of Medicine at  
UVM August 9, 2020*

### A chink in someone's armor

Once she sees my raven hair  
and "exotic" features, will  
she ask me to go, ok? As I flip  
another intubated COVID  
patient prone to ease his  
breathing, I study his brown  
and yellow life lines. Will I be  
a chink and someone's  
armed, or Will I be identified  
for who I am? A doctor.

*Lealani Mae Acosta, MD,  
MPH  
Faculty Member  
Vanderbilt University Medical  
Center August 9, 2020*

### Fractured

They say, "It's not a great  
time to enter medicine".  
They say, "This country is  
fractured beyond repair".  
"So America is like a  
skeleton"? "Then who's  
better to repair, than those  
in healthcare"? We might be  
scared of what's to come.  
But we will work til' we've  
gone numb.

*Lauren Pomerantz  
Medical Student  
Penn State College of  
Medicine- University Park  
August 9, 2020*

### COVID Goodbyes

COVID Goodbyes  
The nurses in the CCU used  
to make their calls at 4 a.m.:  
"Come in at once." Loved  
ones would hurry in just in  
time told hold a hand. But  
now the spouses, lying all  
alone at home, listen to the  
dreaded midnight message

on the telephone, then try,  
but fail, to fall asleep again.



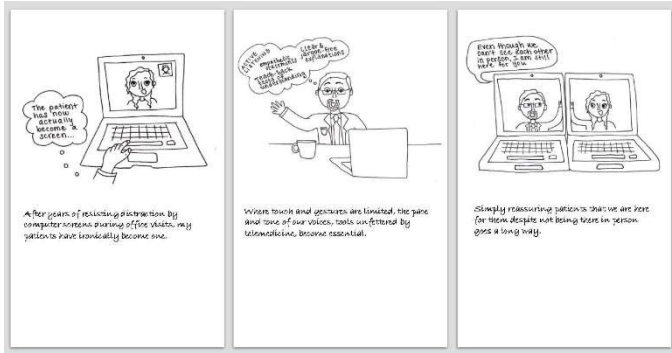
### COVID Goodbyes

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But now the spouses,  
lying all alone at home,  
listen to the dreaded midnight  
message on the telephone,  
then try, but fail,  
to fall asleep again.

*Joseph Gascho  
Faculty Member  
Penn State University College  
of Medicine  
August 9, 2020*





### The New Screen Time

The New Screen Time  
After years of resisting distraction by computer screens during office visits, my patients have ironically become one. Where touch and gestures are limited, the pace and tone of our voices, tools unfettered by telemedicine, become essential. Simply reassuring patients that we are here for them despite not being there in person goes a long way.

*Jillian Pecoriello in  
collaboration with Dr. Jeffrey  
Millstein  
Medical Student  
New York University School  
of Medicine  
August 9, 2020*

### Your Body Speaks

You can no longer recite your hopes and aspirations, but I've held the brain that formatted them. You can no longer communicate your hardships of life, but I've retraced all the scars etched in your skin. You can no longer tell me, but your body speaks for you. What a beautiful life you lived.

*Jessica Pirkle  
Medical Student*

*University of Illinois  
College of Medicine  
August 9, 2020*

### MS2 to MS3

Transition.....Loading  
Scrolling through an endlessly disconnected social media, the light gets drained from me. Scrolling through my emails, meaningful extracurricular opportunities re-enlightening me. Scrolling through clinical modules to read, simulating an experience so close yet so distant for me. Scrolling through a prolonged phase of imposter syndrome, except the scrolling function feels disabled to me.

*Irfan Ali Khan  
Medical Student  
Florida International  
University Herbert Wertheim  
College of Medicine  
August 9, 2020*

### Becoming a Physician During the Pandemic

=I choke down coffee in the parking lot. Once the mask is on, it's on. Under blaring E.D. lights, I quake. I am your doctor. Mask, goggles, face-shield: PPE protects patients from my fear. Taking the Hippocratic Oath, I had imagined my future fear: Will I hurt you? But now, also: Will you hurt me?

*Hanna M. Saltzman  
Resident  
University of Utah,  
Department of Pediatrics  
August 9, 2020*

### Unprecedented times of Uncertainty

Another invisible war to fight. Headline news – “in these unprecedented times of uncertainty.” I am confused, what are we referring to, COVID-19 or how I've felt my whole life as a black man in America? Pause, breathe, think. Maybe knowing is not important because something is different this time. Ironically, I don't feel alone.

*Anonymous  
Medical Student  
Upstate Medical University  
August 9, 2020*

### #13

- Breathe in and breathe out;  
the weight of the world can make you feel burned out.
- But never doubt,  
for you have people who care and lookout.
- Know that on me you can count,  
and some of that weight cross out.

02/29/2020 8:32pm  
Somolino #13

*Francisco J. Lopez-Font  
Medical Student  
San Juan Bautista School of  
Medicine  
August 9, 2020*

### Stamford

We pray before dawn  
Preparing our walk along the Rippowam  
Protect us, protect our child,  
give us strength Holding  
coffee and hands  
We turn quietly up Broad

Protect us, protect our child,  
give us peace We kiss before  
masking

I follow her tired eyes and  
growing womb  
Protect her, protect our  
child, help us all

*Ethan McGann  
Medical Student  
Eastern Virginia Medical  
School  
August 9, 2020*

a crying baby at home with  
his mom. It's our birthday  
this week.

*Diana Robles  
Fellow  
University of California - San  
Francisco  
August 9, 2020*

**Destiny or Obscurity: Life of  
a Health care Professional  
during the pandemic...**

I am not scared of death, but  
the uncertainties of life  
Everyday i go to bed with my  
faith to wake up alive  
Sometimes worried about  
the fall, yet I am standing  
tall It's "Hippocratic Oath"  
Guys! All troubles seems  
small Let's embrace the  
uncertainties with  
responsibility  
To defeat the virus, racism,  
stigma & inhumanity...

*Jarina Begum, MD  
Faculty Member  
Great Eastern Medical School  
and Hospital, Srikakulam, AP,  
India  
August 9, 2020*

**Did my grandmother send  
her?**

Two girls were born on the  
same day thousands of miles  
apart. They grew up speaking  
Spanish. Thirty years later,  
CoVID and pregnancy would  
bring them to meet across an  
ICU window. Over shared  
prayers and a rosary;

intubation; delivery; finally –