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Plexus 2016: *Cultivating Perspectives*

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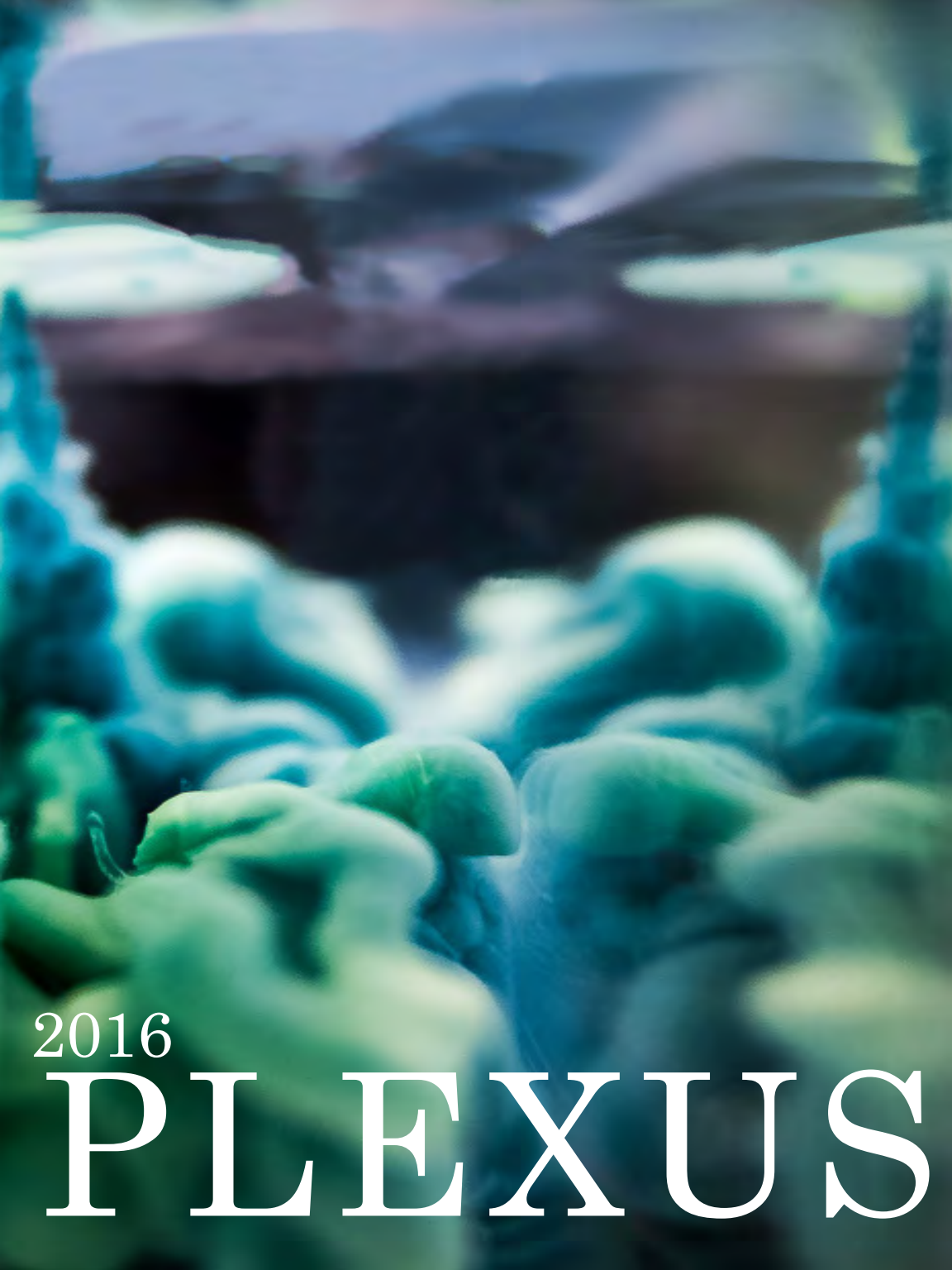


Untitled
Austin Momii, MS2
Photography

Published works were contributed by UCI School of Medicine students, physicians, faculty, staff, alumni, patients and community.

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2016

PLEXUS

PLEXUS is a student-organized publication that showcases artwork by the UCI School of Medicine students, physicians, faculty, staff and patients.

True to its name, **PLEXUS** aspires to connect those who seek to heal and to be healed through the unifying language of art.

In 2016, **PLEXUS** invited submissions to complement our theme of “Cultivating perspectives.” The **PLEXUS** team was astounded by the depth and richness of the pieces submitted, and we thank each and every one of our submitters for their time and thought. Additionally, please find our performing arts pieces on our website, www.uciplexus.org. Previous publications and pieces are available online as well.

Winners of **PLEXUS** Student Competitions made possible by the Program in Medical Humanities & Arts. We would like to congratulate the following winners for this year’s medical student competitions:

Writing competition: 1st: Leigh Goodrich, MS2 “Looking Up”; 2nd: Adam Kalawi MS2 “Death of A Star”; and 3rd: Carolyn Fall, MS2 “Passing.”

Visual competition: 1st: Andy Trang, MS2, “Fibers of Life”; 2nd: Mia Shan, MS2 “Nagare”; and 3rd: Vira Fomenko, MS2 “Ballooning Through Fairy Chimneys.”

Performing arts competition: 1st: Sandra Gattas & Luke Yu, MS1, “When It’s Time”; 2nd: Stefan Brooks, Graduate student, “Best Days Ahead”; and 3rd: Nathan Calixto & Jeremy Martin, MS1, “Two Selections from ‘A Shropshire Lad’.”

Thank you to our wonderful editors, staff and faculty for their support in making this year’s edition possible. We would like to give special thanks to our faculty advisor, Dr. Johanna Shapiro and Dr. Ellena Peterson, Associate Dean of Admissions & Outreach - this book would not have been possible without your guiding hands.

We hope you enjoy **PLEXUS** 2016 – Cultivating Perspectives.

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***1st place winner
**2nd place winner
*3rd place winner

Chief Complaint “Headache”

Jose C. Muniz Castro, MS4

“So how have your headaches been since we last saw you?” I ask a 15-year-old girl (we’ll call her Maria) who was seen in clinic one-week prior for a one-week history of headaches. She tells me she is doing better and that she only had one more headache this past week. On the surface this seemed like a typical case but what lingered beneath her soft-spoken voice was a recent diagnosis of depression with history prior suicidal attempts. I was already in the exam room when I saw this on the prior progress note—it only seemed appropriate to redirect from her chief complaint. I respectfully asked her father to step out while I asked for more information. This short encounter with Maria is a prime example of how a single story can elucidate the need for a more humane take on the politics that often govern our health.

Her dad, a Latino man in his sixties had been sitting near the corner of the room, concerned but quiet. He wore painter’s garments and carried his medical information in a plastic grocery bag. I escorted the man out to the lobby where he confessed he had been worried that he had been too harsh on her and was blaming himself for her suicidal thoughts. He thought he was pressuring her too much with school and thought this might have been the tipping point. The day prior, he found out she tried to end her life twice already—once by ingesting pills and another by attempting to jump off a bridge. I

reassured him and told him we would speak to him more after we finished talking to his daughter. After three separate interviews by the resident, the attending and me, we were glad to confirm she was not currently suicidal.

So I question myself, why would an otherwise healthy 15-year-old want to kill herself? Her HEADSS (Home, education, activities, drugs, sex, suicide) assessment soon revealed just how complicated this poor girl’s life had been. I found out her dad is a single father of four and they all live in a single rented room in Santa Ana. Her mom had abandoned them eight years prior and Maria has practically helped her dad raise her younger siblings since she was 6.

When a simple headache visit gets complicated, extra time is needed. The main issue is not headache anymore. Although we ensured she was not suicidal and referred her to a therapist, I realized the root of her medical problem extends far beyond a mere headache. I could not imagine being in such a vulnerable state—with no role model to talk to, living in a single bedroom and with the added responsibility of caring for three younger siblings. I cannot imagine being abandoned by my mother and to top it off in the worst of economic conditions, with a helpless father who can only work as hard as his body allows.

But in clinic time kept ticking. As the last patient walked out the door we took some extra time to talk to her dad and ensure he had the right contact information if his daughter's condition turned for the worse.

It is cases like this that shape my desire to support measures for social welfare. A 14-year-old stands helpless between a political battle for access to healthcare, immigration reform, better work practices, and a number of other political issues being debated today. Ultimately we are fighting for Maria's life.

I urge us to look through a narrow scope at the lives most afflicted by our decisions and make informed decisions of what is best for the people that help shape our communities. Ultimately the world we build is the world we will live in. My only wish for now is that Maria makes it to her next appointment. ■

▼ Bridge In Spring
Ben Franco, Art for the Soul
Acrylic



Perchance to Dream

Amish A. Dangodara, MD

Every struggling breath
Betrayed the gentle sway
Of her heaving breasts.

The strained look eased,
Erased from her face,
And in a moment, she slept.

Peacefully lying there,
But without any notice,
Her breath turned to air.

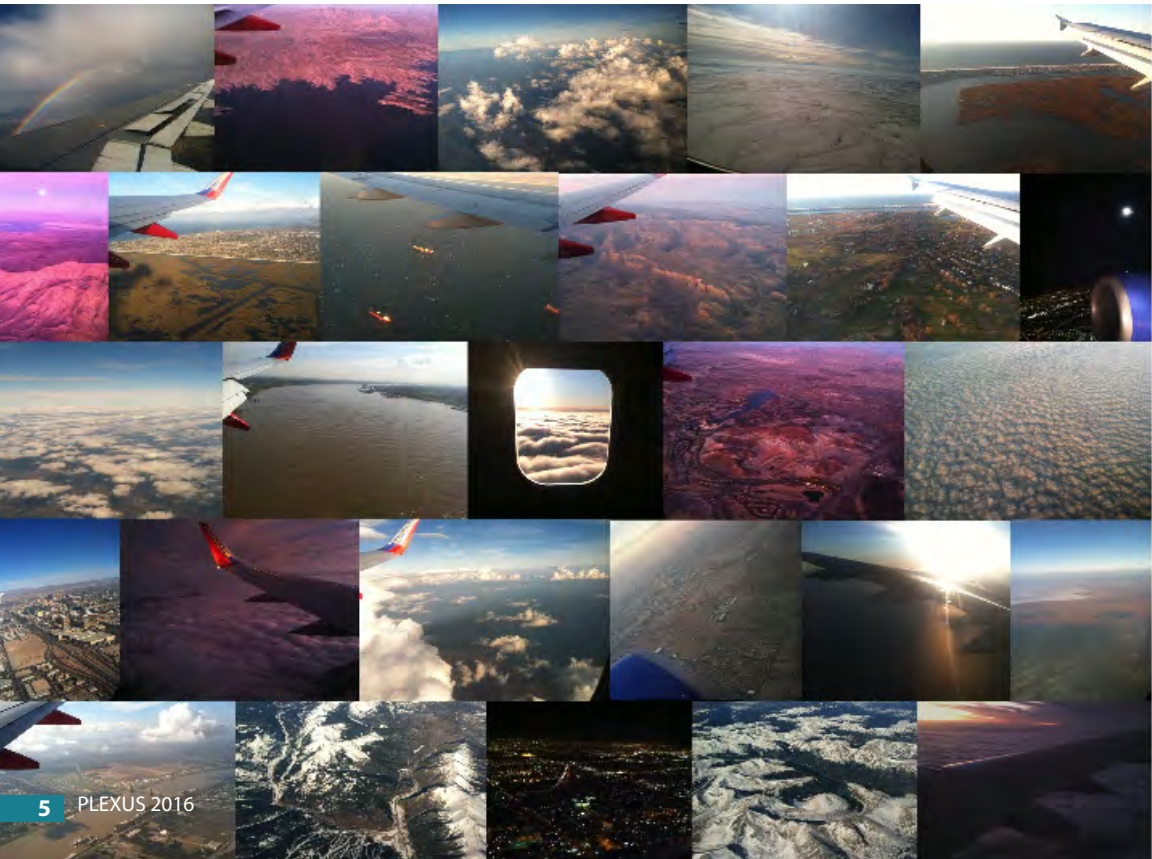
Fortune let her dream
Eternally forever more,
But no one else noticed...

Until the alarms took note
Of what I had already known
Just moments before.

The unwelcome guest,
Her pain, finally left her,
Only to occupy the room.

Everyone expected it,
But now it was real,
Sorrow once secret,
Was freed and ours to feel. ■

▼ interVIEWS
Melissa Westermann, MD





▼ Long Division 1
Isaure Hostetter, MS1
Watercolor

▲ Springtime in my Dreams
Nancy Webster, Art for the Soul
Watercolor

▼ allele
Stefano Sensi, MD, PhD





Looking Up

Leigh Goodrich, MS2

▲ At Lub
Andrew Nguyen, MS2

It was like a dance, the way she moved. Her delicate fingers clicked away at the cash register. She grabbed a cup from the stack and wrote a customer's name in big, loopy letters, quickly yet precisely.

Be quick, but don't hurry. That quote by John Wooden. It's what Clay thought of as he watched her, the lovely barista. It's what he always tried to remember in the operating room, his own little sort of dance. He had never been a big coffee drinker. Two weeks ago, he had been called in for an emergency procedure at four in the morning. Nearly 20 years out of residency, it was rare that he had to disrupt his schedule, but in the most dangerous cases, there was simply nobody else who could do what he could. That was the beauty of the dance. In this case, one of the deepest aneurysms he had seen in his career threatened

to rupture. Seven hours later he was walking out of the OR, blinking hard as his eyes stung with absolute exhaustion. It was then that he saw the coffee shop. He had walked by it nearly every day for years. That early afternoon that felt like a late night, he walked in for the first time. And there she was.

That doctor's here again, Laura thought, as she caught a glimpse of his white coat in the back of the line. He had been coming in almost every day for the past couple of weeks. She felt his eyes on her as she handed another customer a receipt. She focused on the register, anticipating the orders of her regulars.

Clay watched as she moved through the line, smiling and chatting, but keeping her eyes focused on her work. She had looked up at him once last week, her blue eyes meeting his gaze with an intensity

that startled him. He had felt his mind go blank, unable to do anything, yet also unable to look away. Now, shuffling forward in line, he felt his heart race, hoping he would get another glimpse.

“Hello, Dr. Perry. Medium Americano with room?”

“Clay,” he said, pointing at his hospital badge with a nervous smile. She looked up. Periwinkle. Her eyes were an almost periwinkle blue.

“Laura,” she said softly, tapping the nametag pinned to her blouse. “So, the usual?” She had looked down again.

“Yes, great. Thanks.” He opened his wallet. He had to make something happen, and his mouth suddenly felt so dry. “Sit with me?”

“What?”

“Um, I just thought, would you sit with me? If you get a break?” He couldn’t believe the words coming out of his mouth. He was an experienced, respected neurosurgeon. Why did he feel like an awkward teenager again? “I’m just alone, and, or I felt alone, and...”

“Okay,” she interrupted him. He looked up, confused. “Okay, I’ll sit with you. Just give me a minute, okay?”

He nodded and moved to find a seat. He was sure she was just taking pity on him, but at least he would get the chance to talk to her. It suddenly dawned on him that he had no idea what to say, or why he had even been so nervous.

Laura watched the doctor settle into a corner table. She poured herself a cup of dark roast and meandered over.

“Thanks for sitting with me. You didn’t have to do that,” he chuckled. “I’m not quite sure what came over me, to be honest. I’ve been up for about twenty hours and I’m a bit delirious, you’ll have to forgive me.”

His tone had changed completely. In their little corner table, with his coffee arranged neatly at arm’s length, he could compose himself and speak with ease. She smiled.

“It’s no problem, really. The least I could do for such a good customer. You’re becoming quite the regular, aren’t you?”

He couldn’t admit quite yet that he had only kept coming back to see her, so he told her his schedule had recently changed.

“So, is it your job that makes you feel alone?” she asked, sipping her coffee. He furrowed his brow, surprised. “You said you wanted some company,” she explained. “Because you’re feeling alone?”

He hadn’t realized those words had escaped him, but they were true. Was it his job that made him feel alone? He could see why she would think that. He fixed the part of patients’ bodies that controlled everything else, but they never knew him. It was interesting, when he thought about it. Going into someone’s brain, putting his hands on that mysterious command center that held that person’s entire life, he

connected with them in a way he never fully understood, though he felt it.

His father had been a trauma surgeon. He had wanted Clay to do the same, bringing him to shadow in the ER, proudly introducing him to all the top surgeons there. Clay remembered watching traumas come in, car or motorcycle accidents, people covered in blood and dirt. Those nights were always stretches of calm punctuated by moments of overwhelming chaos. Clay remembered thinking it was so messy. But then again, his father thrived in chaos, jumping from one mess to another. The first Dr. Perry had raised his son alone, after Clay's mother left when he was three. There was a series of stepmothers, each remembered for their particular brand of insanity, but nothing ever quite stuck. Everything was messy.

Clay thought it was that personal experience with hardship that made his father so good at delivering bad news, which was a fairly frequent task in his line of work. Clay would watch from a distance, as his father would sit with a wife or a mother, speaking in a hushed and calming voice. He embraced tragedy as an inherent part of life's mess. It's why he never understood how Clay could do something that he deemed unemotional, almost robotic.

Laura listened as Clay talked, watching how his face moved as he spoke of his father. He had a sadness about him that felt familiar to her. "I've felt alone too, you know," she said. "And it's actually this job that really helped me."

"I can't imagine you feeling lonely," he said, making her smile. He paused.

"Do you realize you hardly ever look up when you're working?" She met his gaze. Periwinkle blue. "You're so graceful, moving around and taking orders, but you never look up."

She had never thought about it, but she knew he was right. Work was such a comfort to her because she was able to get out of her head. She could lose herself in making drinks and mindlessly chatting. She could escape the memories that used to follow her around.

"I never noticed that, I guess I just get lost in the routine."

"Well, you have beautiful eyes. And I think you should look up more," he told her. "You might miss part of life that's right in front of you."

She looked at him now, as if deciding how much to share with him. He found himself hoping she would respond, wishing he could see into her brain and know what she was thinking.

"Is that why your father didn't like neurology?" she asked him. "Because you were avoiding real life? What was right in front of you?"

She had turned the questions back to him. It was like they were chasing each other, both intrigued, wanting to know the most while revealing the least. He wasn't sure he had ever met someone who could match his ability to dodge personal questions.

"You're good," he smiled, throwing his hands up in a mock show of defeat. "Alright, you got me. Yes, my father

thought neurology was too academic, too removed. You know, I'm never the one comforting people or talking to families if we lose a patient."

"Because you can't or because you don't want to?"

The question lingered for a moment. "Both," he answered. "I don't like the mess of it. I know how that sounds...it's just...I had a lot of that my whole life. I like doing something precise, clean. And I guess my father just thought it was too cerebral."

"No pun intended," Laura quipped. They both chuckled, feeling a tension lighten.

"You're too smart for this job," Clay said frankly. "Really, what are you doing here? I don't mean to offend you, I just can't seem to figure you out."

She smiled, taking a long sip of her coffee. "I told you, I was very lonely when I first started working here."

"Well, there's people behind those coffee cups, you know. Maybe if you had been looking up more," he joked. "You might meet someone..."

"No," she stopped him.

"I didn't mean..."

"You don't understand." She started to tie her apron. "I really should get back to work."

"Please, I was just joking around," he tried to explain. She sighed heavily.

"I was married. We had a whole life together, you know?" Clay nodded,

entranced, afraid to say anything that might interrupt her. He knew he was about to hear the story of her life, the story of why she was the way she was, why he felt so connected to her in some mysterious way.

"My husband worked late shifts and he always came home smelling of coffee. To this day, the smell of espresso reminds me of him." She took a deep breath. "He wasn't even supposed to be on the road that night. Gosh, that was a snowy night. It was nearly midnight when he was driving home and a truck going the opposite way lost control on the ice. It was nobody's fault, really, but suddenly he was just gone."

Her eyes had filled with tears, those beautiful blue eyes now full of memory and loss. Clay couldn't bring himself to speak, not knowing what to possibly say. "I'm so sorry," he managed. She nodded.

"Don't tell me to look up and live my life," her voice cracked with emotion. "I already had a life." Clay put his hand on hers.

"*You* are the one who needs to look up and really see people," she said, staring at him now with an intensity that made him retreat. She paused for a long time as he searched her face, trying to understand.

"The night of Michael's accident, they rushed him to the Emergency Room. They didn't think they could do anything, there was too much bleeding in his brain, but they said if there was anyone who could save him, there was this one doctor who would try."

“No,” Clay whispered, silently begging her to make the story stop.

“Yes. You. You were the one with the only chance at saving him. But you didn’t, you couldn’t.”

He remembered the accident now, head-on collision with a massive subarachnoid hemorrhage. He remembered now the nurse telling him the wife was in the waiting room, but he never did that part. There was always somebody else who could step in, so he had walked out to clean the blood from his gloves and move on with his day. How he wished now he could take that back.

“Did you know who I was, this whole time?” he asked her, wondering how he could ever face her again.

“That first day, when I saw your badge, I recognized your name,” she answered quietly. “I know you did everything you

could. I know that.” He nodded. “Just look up, okay? I’m going to get back to work, now. I hope you keep coming in,” she said, standing up.

“But everything is so...”

“Messy?” she asked. He smiled. That was indeed the word he was searching for. She sighed, wiped her eyes and pulled her hair back. “Yes, very messy.” She took a step towards the counter and looked back at him. “But that’s life. Beautiful, isn’t it?”

And it was. ■

▼ Perspective
Erica Turley-De Villa, Financial Analyst



The Unwelcome Guest

Jasmin Harounian, MS3

pain is a funny thing
it comes and goes as it pleases
without
regard.

In moments of concentration,
it draws
focus

away
from it's intended target.

it pays no mind to
your sleep schedule
your study attempts
your prior engagements
your weekend plans.

never welcomed
yet increasingly present
never completely absent
yet, at times,
noticeably unnoticeable

did it flare up
again
or had it never left to begin with? ■



▲ Portrait of a Mursi Woman
Mario Bernaba, MS2

▶ Dreaming in My Garden
Samantha Sisniega, Art for the Soul
Acrylic





Coloring Names

Austin Momii, MS2

▲ Reflecting on Bolivia
Ricardo Perez, Art for the Soul
Watercolor

Thomas recalled her chiffon scarf and cornflower hair gently drifting with the current of the wind. “She looks so peaceful”, he thought to himself. She was the most magnificent woman he had ever seen. When he asked for her name, she replied with a reticence that was markedly furtive.

“Victoria” she said.

Without repose, Thomas replied, “Your name has such a sublime shade of green.”

Thomas had been told many years prior that he had an exquisitely rare condition called ‘synesthesia’. For Thomas, names are more than discrete frequencies that gently strike the cochlea; they are vessels that deliver enchanting colors in unique patterns.

With synesthesia, sensory experience

becomes intertwined with another seemingly distinct sensory experience. People with synesthesia experience a world quite different from you and I. Synesthetics ask us to consider a world where a delineation between one sense from another is a fundamentally arbitrary matter. In essence, synesthesia challenges the very notion of the categorization of ‘senses’ themselves. If sounds carry color and smells contain distinct physical sensations, then are these ‘senses’ truly distinct sensory experiences? It is clear that hearing for Thomas is also seeing and feeling.

It is largely the dogma of medical science to categorize senses as separate neurological processes - even a cursory glance at a modern physiology text would suggest as much. These sources, however, lie in direct contrast to the experience of Thomas.

“Your name has much more of a blue hue. Your blue reminds me of the Aegen Sea near Santorini,” he said with a blithesome glimmer in his eyes.

It was truly delightful hearing Thomas equate names, colors and sounds to his unique experience of the world. The vividness in his memory and the artfulness in the way he articulated his thoughts were the rhetorical equivalent of a brush stroke of Manet. With each statement, I felt my mind attempting to conjure a world with interlaced color and sound. Thomas’ world was riveting, akin to embarking on a trip to a foreign land.

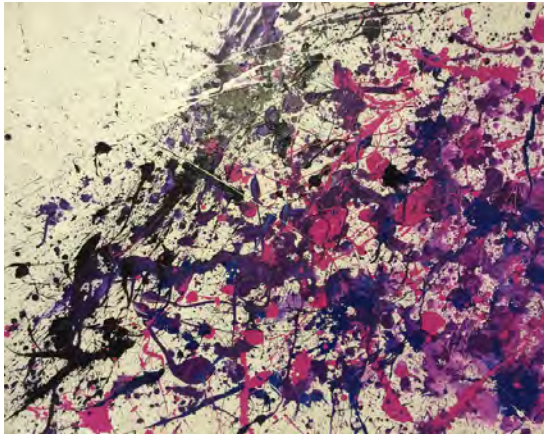
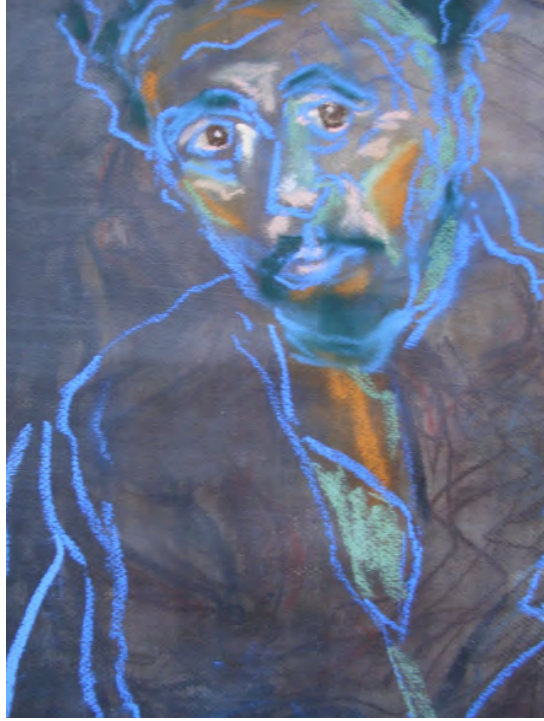
Sensory perceptions serve as a sediment for which we build upon our conceptions of the world. Thomas’ sediment appeared to be so different from mine, that at first blush one would consider his perceptual experience to lack the capacity to be related in natural language.

This was most certainly not the case.

Thomas grasps his phone and shows me Victoria. “Even when I hear her name to this day, I can’t help but be enveloped by the same sense of greenish euphoria that struck me the first day that I heard her utter it herself.”

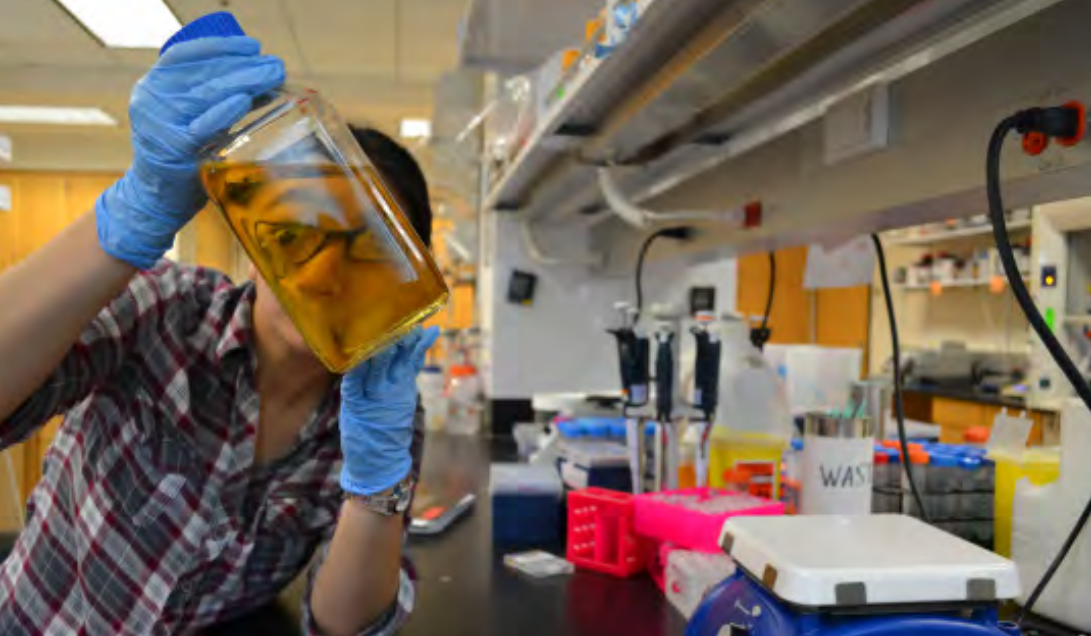
Sharing the same external world with Thomas, yet having such a distinct experience of the same world reminded me of the power of language to communicate our experience.

“Thomas,” I said before leaving his room, “I think your name has more of a purple hue.” ■



▲ Native New Yorker
Rolanda Engstrom, Director,
Art for the Soul

▲ This Panting is not about a Girl
Michael Abrouk, MS4
Acrylic



Flu Shots

Hanna Liu, MS4

“We don’t get those”
say the parents
in a bid to spare
Two days of Sniffles
autumn air

We coax and cajole
we wheedle and whine
Sometimes we prevail
and other times
We fail.

Unknown consequences
until every now and then
when
We end up reciting
A polite

I told you so. ■

▲ Trial and Error
Sunober Siddiqi, MS1

▲ U-Turn Through Istanbul’s Golden Horn
Vira Fomenko, MS2

▶▶ Cerebellum
Tiffany Pham, MS2
Acrylic

Demented Patient

Joanna Shapiro, Ph. D.

My roommate on the orthopedic ward
Is about 80
Yesterday she fell and broke her hip
while she was doing the laundry
She reached too far for the detergent
And down she went

The next day after she returns from
surgery
she has what the nurse informs me
is post-anesthesia dementia
Basically, she knows who she is
but she can't understand what happened
to her

She can chat perfectly lucidly
about her children (one here, one in
Oregon)
her eight grandchildren
(they are really something else)
and her dogs
(a black lab, a German shepherd, and
a stubborn dachshund)

But she can't understand what happened
to her
She can't grasp that she's in a hospital
When dinner is delivered
she acknowledges it is pretty good
but then insists she'll go to the
refrigerator
and make something better
I persuade her we should just eat up

She pulls out her IV repeatedly
and tries to get up to go to the bathroom
She is very worried about not making it
to choir practice tomorrow
and wonders how her children
will find her
Periodically, in the middle of one of our

amicable conversations
she will suddenly blurt out
"But what happened to me?"
At first I try to explain about the laundry
and the detergent
but then I fall silent
How can I answer that question?

Periodically she cries out
"I'm not supposed to be here"
and "What am I doing here?"
"There's been some mistake"

The nurse explains she is demented
and moves her closer to the nurses'
station
But secretly I don't think she's demented
at all
I feel just the same way
and I'm asking just the same questions
Only I can't say them out loud ■



► Where and Why
Rolanda Engstrom,
Director, Art for the Soul
Oil Painting



Passing

Carolyn Fall, MS2

“**Y**o you, volunteer, can you clean up E, Crazy Girl just threw up on the floor.” No, no I can’t, volunteers can’t clean up bodily fluids. But of course I don’t say that. It’s Friday night in the ED and there’s no time or patience for strictly following the rules. So I nod and start moving through the hallway overcrowded with beds and people, making my way towards room E. I pass by some of the regulars: Drunk Guy, Legless Man, Meth Addict, and Cursing Lady, on my way to see tonight’s Crazy Girl.

I pass the guard outside the door and walk into E. I see you lying on the bed. Your hands are covering your face as you sob. I kneel down to start cleaning up the vomit, which shows traces of what looks like Cheerios. “It’s OK sweetheart,” I say to the floor, “it’s not so bad, everything’s going to be OK.” Sweetheart, what am I saying, you’re practically the same age as me. Sometimes I don’t know why I ever say anything out loud. Then you

look down at me through your fingers, the nails ragged from where you’ve clawed your cheeks, and you whisper “No it’s not. You don’t know anything. It’s never going to be OK.”

I look away. I stare at the yellow splatters in front of me and wonder what to say. Because the truth is I do know. I know you. I know where you’ve been and I know where you’re going.

When you were a little kid you were normal. You had imaginary friends. You cried that there were monsters under your bed or in your closet. You never wanted to be left alone, you were your mother’s shadow. Everyone knew you’d grow out of it. But then you were 8, and you still were too afraid to go outside some days. You still heard footsteps following you, and disembodied screams that made you cower in your parents’ bed. You saw shadows move and morph in front of you, and could barely sleep from the nightmares that began as

soon as you dared to shut your eyes. Eventually everyone agreed you weren't normal, so your parents took you to the doctor.

You remember the doctor talking quietly to your mother, and then she starts to cry. You wonder if you're dying. You often think about dying, you think it might be for the best. Your mother takes you home and you sit on her lap. She rubs your back like she does when you have the flu. She tells you that you're sick, but the doctor gave you some medicine to make you better. He just isn't sure how much you need, it's going to take some time to figure that out how much will make the fear go away and the shadows stop moving. Then she looks you in the eye and says very clearly, "this is a secret sweetheart. You can't tell anyone about this medicine or going to see the doctor. Kids can be cruel." You understand what she means. This medicine isn't like your friend's asthma inhaler or your classmate's insulin. This is something shameful, something humiliating. Something that would make people look at you differently, and whisper behind your back. You know you're strange enough as it is, you know that you don't need to go adding fuel to the fire.

So you start the medicine. One pill seems to multiply exponentially, and all around you the world seems to fall away, to be replaced by a thick fog. Where once you dreaded sleep, that soon becomes your life. You shuffle through school, weekends, vacations, barely registering the life around you. You lose your friends, your personality, your very ability to feel anything beyond the

unending desperation to sleep. But you don't care. So what that you don't laugh anymore, not feeling anything means you also don't feel like dying or crying out in fear.

But then one day the fog begins to recede. Slowly at first, but now you can see a peak of sunlight, a patch of blue sky. You shake your head and look around at the world you've nearly forgotten existed. How many years has it been? Six? Seven? You've spent nearly half your life in the fog. Suddenly you feel like Goldilocks. Could the pills you blindly swallow every morning and every evening finally be just right? In your amazement you look around and realize that you're alone. All your friends are gone, everything you once were has been thoroughly erased. You've managed in your foggy state to wander into an isolated swamp, a place you've never seen before.

You feel excited and afraid. Excited just to feel again, but afraid to leave the mindless comfort of the fog. You think of running back to the safety of sleep walking through your life, but you choose to move forward. You can feel your old self standing there behind you, crying and cowering at every noise and shadow in the swamp, but you ignore her. You set about rebuilding yourself. You relearn how to laugh, how to talk to people, how to look someone in the eye. At first your structure is weak and falls over at the slightest adverse wind. But each time you crumble, you learn how to lay a stronger foundation and build higher walls.

It takes years, but each time you are knocked down you rise again, more

robust and more substantial than before. You revel in your strength, at the thickness of your walls and the depth of your moat. You test yourself, setting tougher and tougher challenges to prove to everyone there is not a single crack in your defenses. You show them you can be the hardest worker, the smartest student, and you never once will complain.

You want them all to look at you in admiration, but they can only look at your enviable fortifications and no deeper. Because you know that deep below, hidden in the depths of your foundations, in an iron room without a door, she's still there. You've tried to bury her, tried to ignore her and starve her into nothingness, but she's still there. You can hear her terrified shrieks and hopeless pleas, and every day she reminds you of the shameful weakness that lives deep within you.

You hide her carefully, because if anyone ever knew about her you know they would never look at you the same way again. Admiration would give way to pity. Trust would be replaced with doubt. Can she really handle this? Is she a walking time bomb, one obstacle away from a breakdown? Does she really fit in, can she ever really belong? Perhaps they'd never say it out loud, but you would see it in their face, in the way their eyes slide past yours to the floor. Yes, you decide, it's far safer to keep her secret if you want to survive in the world outside the fog.

Still, occasionally you look around at the strangers passing on the street, at your friends sitting next to you, or at

the people you hope to be in the future. You wonder if any of them have a secret self, buried deep within, tightly sealed inside a room never to be seen or spoken of. You wonder about their story, and worry, or perhaps hope, that they can see your own. You wonder what amount of comfort acknowledgement would bring? What amount of ridicule?

I stare at those yellow splatters in front of me. A film is forming around the edges and the sour smell is filling the room. My thoughts are taking me too far away. I wonder if any of this is your story. Probably not. Is it mine? That I cannot say. The words curdle in my mouth. So instead I wipe up the mess in front of me and manage to spew out "I hope you feel better!" as I awkwardly back out of the room and into the barely controlled chaos of the hallway. I pass on, and we both continue with our lives. Just as lonely as we were before. ■



3Perspectives

Steven Cramer, MD

Near my neck pink dry curved flesh forms fists that squeeze tight bounce then loosen,
again

While this gray top white draped buttoned tower

Of a man everyone

Respects my parents in fact slow their syllables when they say his name even in the car

Blots out all light

From the bulb behind the glass square on the ceiling in the room with the same Seuss
pictures

(the other rooms have circles over the bulbs I wonder why this one is square)

My mother sits face pulled tight posture shifts mirroring clench unclench cycles

He never even asked why

I don't take my pills not that I have an answer

I do not understand that boy so smart but what am I going to do what are we going to do

Oh the poor thing how he suffers who is he hurting why doesn't he listen

All that I do we do

For him

Doesn't he know what can happen

He's playing with fire this is serious no time for games this is costing me a fortune he's
going to get it

*(I remember my own mother running red lights my appendix ruptured, carrying me in,
stayed all night)*

A year of missing work thank goodness I wasn't fired but Jackson got the promotion
JACKSON

Because this monster has been tonguing and spitting out his pills even as the failed
doses were increased

Will we finally get this wretched disease under control?

My angel

This poor boy

Such troubles, so young

Let's try an ounce of fear and

See if 10 mg actually works

Fool

When I was training

You'd be dead already

Take the damn pills

Latchkey patient, 4 of 'em an hour

Times have changed

What do you expect

*(2 more days then Hawaii here
I come) ■*

◀ Sir James Parkinson and His Disease

Arnold Starr, MD

Watercolor & Ink

Untitled

Brianna Williams, MS1

If I had to ascribe a list of descriptors to myself it'd be something like: Female, medical student, feminist, sex educator, makeup addict, casual comedian, person with Multiple Sclerosis.

That last one doesn't quite fit as nicely as the others. It's not something I would bring up in casual conversation. Ultimately, when disclosure is made I'm met with the same handful of responses.

"I'm so sorry." *I'm not dead yet.*

"So-and-so *insert person separated by six degrees of association or famous celebrity with MS* has MS and you'd never know it!" *This is one of my favorites, because it's a perfect illustration of how someone with MS may not look sick, but it's because they work ten times harder than normal to appear that way. Who knows, maybe you saw them on a 'good' day.*

"What is that? How did you get it?" *It's an invisible disease for the most part. Probably bad luck. Or maybe from drinking all that diet coke...*

Invariably, every medical student has that one patient they remember, who really imbues themselves into the mind. But what if one of those patients is you? The crazy thing is, I know I must not be the only med student living with chronic illness. It may only account for a small subset of students, but my situation cannot be unique.

Sometimes we make the error of thinking that those who are the providers of healthcare services are not users themselves. It's easy to forget when you're on one end of the spectrum

for a long time. We silently believe that we are immune to illness (pardon the pun). In reality, we are not exempt from it.

If I could have a conversation with my body I would ask: *How could you?* Autoimmune disease feels like the ultimate betrayal of the body to the self. And I can't help but feel like a failure, an embarrassment to medicine. Here I am trying to be a 'healer' and my own body has failed me. I can't help but transfer that blame to myself.

While MS is no prize, it did give me something valuable: perspective. I kind of live on both ends of the spectrum now. I have an idea of how a patient might be feeling; why they don't want to take that medicine; what it feels like to grieve for their past life before diagnosis; how frustrated they are with our current healthcare system. I feel for them. I am one of them. I'm forced to make hard decisions for myself because of it.

As a future physician, you will have to make some hard decisions too. What MS helped me realize is that those choices go beyond the algorithms you'll be taught, or diagnosis alone. The complexity can be daunting, but if you're up for it then so am I. ■

■ Best Days Ahead
Stefan Brooks, Graduate student
Composition
Please visit www.uciplexus.org

#whitecoatsforblacklives

Sophia Yang, MS3

i would put my body
between you and the world
lay on the concrete for
my black brothers and sisters
but i just have my words
and my heart
cupped in my hands
and a white coat
and it will need to be
something
one small white coat
sleeves folded to the elbow
but there are not enough
bandages and sutures and staples
to apply justice

because all lives matter
unless your name is
Tamir Rice
only 12 years old
Trayvon Martin
wearing a hoodie
Eric Garner
gasping for breath
Sandra Bland
whose crime was not signaling

...but they say
all lives matter
. . .
i place my stethoscope
and listen
where does it hurt?
and an echo whispers
everywhere
there can be no justice
no peace
when every day brings a new report
of a slaying in the street
i will listen
i will remember
and all i can offer
my small white coat
sleeves folded to the elbow
white coats
for
black lives ■





◀ Setting Perspectives
Avital Fischer, MSTP
Acrylic

▲ Portifino, Italy
Ben Franco, Art for the Soul
Acrylic

◀ Birds of a Feather
Jacqueline Kulwin, MS2

Your Love

Chalat Rajaram, MD

You care for me, for my body and spirit
You comfort my pain, bathe me, and
turn me.

You help heal my open wounds,
They are physical and emotional.

You are a team, health aide, nurse;
Doctor, chaplain, social worker
You keep coming into my home
To help, soothing my dying body.

You deal with my inadequacies;
The demanding family, better or for
worse.

For your's is not to judge, you give love
Your combined kindness envelops me.

Now, I must leave, help me how to
Medicate me, massage, and give me
your gentle touch.

I came to this earth with love,
I am blessed now to leave with your
love. ■

▼ Afternoon on the Lake
Anjali Raasaraani, Art for the Soul
Acrylic



Medicine: When the Call Comes

Dean Spencer, MS2

The phone rang.
“Hi Mom!”
“Hi Son.”

Immediately I knew something was wrong. Her tone seemed filled with heaviness yet urgency. Like she was trying to put off making the call, but calling as soon as possible with something important at the same time.

“What’s wrong?”
“It’s your aunt. She had a stroke.”
Immediately my mind exploded.

“NO!” No. In retrospect I don’t know why that was the first response to hearing the news. It wasn’t a statement of denying it happened. I wasn’t trying to tell my mother she was wrong. I fully believed her and believed it had already happened. I just didn’t want to. My mind continued to race. Was my aunt alive? Could she talk? Could she walk? Did someone find her at her house and the stroke had happened a long time ago? Where was she now? Was she going to be okay? Do I need to book a flight? What was going on? This all took about one second. I had learned about strokes, or cerebral vascular accidents as the textbooks refer to it, just a few months prior in my first year of medical school. They aren’t uncommon. I just didn’t think it would happen to anyone I loved.

This wasn’t a distant aunt that you see only a couple times in your life at weddings or occasional holidays. This was someone who had been my next door neighbor growing up, who had been at

all of my birthdays and I had been to all of hers. Someone I had made meaningful memories with at every single life stage since I was born. Someone who cared about my life and what happened and how I was doing and I cared about her life and what happened and how she was. And in this kind of moment you realize how it really feels to care about someone. I think that is what makes it scarier.

She was alive. She had just arrived to the hospital, they admitted her right away. They say if you want to skip the ER wait time, try to make a side of your face look droopy and say you have a headache. She had lost a lot of movement on her right side and had some trouble speaking. They were running tests.

I felt less anxious, she was going to live. Once my emotions settled my medical student mind began churning. What were all the important details on cerebral vascular accidents? We had even had a guest speaker a couple months ago—a stroke survivor. He was 5 years out of his accident, now walking independently and speaking without any obvious impediment. He was the poster child. Yet, it could happen to my aunt too, right?

Trying to remember material from two exams ago amid all of the fresh material for the current unit was harder than I thought it would be. That seems to be the nature of being a student in the first years of medical school. Immersing

myself in learning the human body from lectures, textbooks, labs, and articles provides the feeling that I know so much, but is in dynamic flux with the frequent realization that I actually know so little. We work so hard to learn the anatomy, physiology, and pathology of disease. We train for hours and hours every day to memorize diagnoses, medications and treatments to someday help others who are sick. Yet all of the training, studying, and learning came in a new perspective for me that day, when medicine became more personal. The intellectual knowledge helped with understanding the language, explaining terms to my family members, or thinking about what my aunt was experiencing. But, it didn't change the emotions; the fear, the worry, the hope, and the uncertainty of the future.

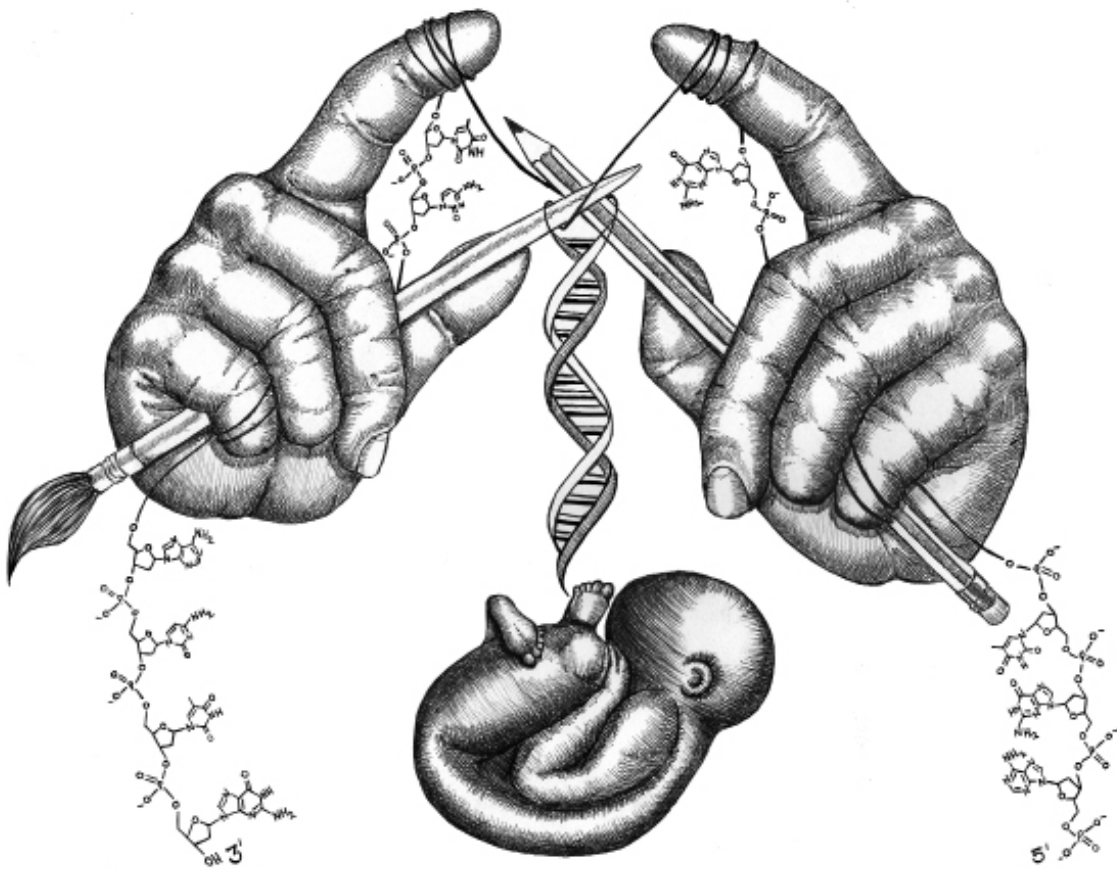
With all of the studying, late nights, and burnt out neurons we experience in medical school it is easy to forget the human side of medicine. I hope that we remember that we need to learn and train not just how medicine is inside of people but also how it affects them. Every day we learn the objective facts, but it is easy to forget that medicine is everywhere and affects everyone. Someday, even for us, medicine will

become subjective and impact us directly. For patients in the hospital, that subjective moment of medicine is right now.

So as I continue my journey through medical school, learning more disease rates, risk factors, and conditions, I try to remember what it felt like to be on the other side of the medical equation. What it felt like when the statistic applied to me and my family. I know there may be times that I will be the one making the phone call to someone else and hope that I will always remember what it felt like to be on the other side of medicine, when the call comes. ■

► Heart
Beatrice Sun, MS1
Pencil Drawing





▲ Fiber of Life
Andy Trang, MS2
Pen Drawing



▲ Ballooning Through Fairy Chimneys
Vira Fomenko. MS2

Mornings on the Margin

Giancarlo A. Garcia, MS4

Though still an outsider
I had come to know all the usual characters
And by some saintly grace
Felt a grain of hope
As I made rounds each Sunday at dawn
In the bitter shadow of Strawberry Peak.
Notched in his usual spot
On the sandstone margin of St. Thomas'
Parish,
He burns bright as the embers at the tip
of his tongue,
Beset by whiskers anointed with
Yesterday's citrus and wheat.
And each sandaled foot
With tattered top but stalwart sole
Bathes comfortably in the morning light
As he kindly paws at his mottled copper
hair –
Fringe on an oriental rug –
And then gently taps an old ochre Virginia
matchbox
On his knee.

As I kneel down at his side I greet him.
He reaches for a reply
But his words fall to dust.
As usual he never returns my gaze
But stares at the ash on the wrinkled
pavement,
His voice only exhumed from the yellow
depths of silence
As he hums *When the Swallows Come
Back to Capistrano*
In an octave all his own.

The pipes of the organ now accompany us
Bellowing deep into the arms of our empty
hymnal.
The rains will soon come and
Extinguish the cries of this matchbox
choir.

For a moment I question my presence here
But cast my doubt aside
And assure myself that all is right.
I watch as the fingers of his left hand
Begin to slide away from his burnt lips,
Hang forlornly in the air before me,
And receive two sterile orange-capped
vessels,

Soon to be consecrated
With 40 units of fruit from the tabernacle.
They now smolder softly in the creases of
his blameless palm
And like tangerine tulips plucked by a
curious boy
Quietly disappear into the mouth of his
Mackinaw coat,
Always half a size too small.

All is right
I tell myself once more,
And feel my gift worthy of this stonewashed
banquet.
I again attempt to catch his gaze
But lose it
As a burst of wind swells my eyes shut
And it is gone.

So with the kettledrums beating
distantly to summon the sparrows
And the arch of the mountains gleaming
with silver and rust

I turn to leave,
Yet feel a trembling tug at my sleeve
As he, too, rises.
His arms reach for a shy embrace
And sheepishly pull me toward him
As though he fears what he does not
know.

Forgotten leather and hollow promises
Ruffle against my ribs.
His ear now pressed at my temple
I picture his shallow smile cast across
the boulevard behind me
Vermillion and speckled black –
I only hope he imagines me
Smiling back.

Four hundred ants scratching at my
cheek.

A viperous plume of dying Virginia
embers

Escapes from his hand below.
It climbs my face and
Nestles beneath my nostrils
As we linger in this broken sunrise.

But that same loathsome aroma
That pierces my marrow without
remorse –

That same aroma
That poisoned my own father's breath
And now taints the very fibers of my
overcoat –

Has never before this moment
Smelled so sweet. ■

■ Two Selections from “A Shropshire Lad”
Nathan Calixto & Jeremy Martin, MS1

Song

Please visit www.uciplexus.org



▲ Flowers in Sunlight
Anjali Raasaraani, Art for the Soul
Acrylic

▲ No Title
Michael Bernaba, MS2



▲ Safe Surrender
Jessica Gandy, MS4
Pencil Drawing

Outpatient Peds

Katherine Stern, MS3

Shave and a haircut—

He is at eye level, in the arms of a
sweatshirt, in the air

A zip-lock bag dangling

A handful of yellow puffs into his open
mouth

A swoop attack and he's down,

Crunching his impressions onto paper

With flood gates, rivers, crocodiles.

We bring tubes and lights,

The poking things.

But, roaring rivers, lions, alligators!

He is a boot stuck in the bog, and bellow
is the only hope,

Until he sucks it back up

Into the Silent apocalypse

And you hold your breath too...

There is a smaller face, looking up from a
rocker on the floor.

What now, that I've smiled at him

While I hold his brother's head down? ■

▶ Wilson Enjoying
Catalina Island
Hoda Anton-Culver, PhD
Watercolor



The Age of Humanity

Andrei Novac, MD

When walls age,
They soften like graying hair of age.

When words age
They carry wisdom of past stories.
Stories told by aging people's people.
Stories that join humans at the hip.

When hearts age, they open
To allow the hungry in.

When lands age
The grass and wheat grow tall and plentiful.

May aging hearts and words and arms
Reach out to cast away all walls and barriers
of an estranging world. ■



▲ Peaceful grazing
Sandra Ruiz, Art for the Soul
Pastel

▼ Rafiki's Tree
Jacqueline Kulwin, MS2





▲ Dance
James Brock, DO
Oil on Canvas



▲ Ethiopian Brotherhood
Lauren Rosario, MS2



The Doctors A Youngster Will See

Nathan Molina, MS3

The doctors, the doctors, a youngster will see...
Their names, their names, unforgettable to me!

When leaving the womb,
directly to Coombs,
Galant and Morō,
Babinski, Fallot.

The doctors, the doctors, a youngster will see...
Their names, their names, so memorable to me!

Like Wilson and Wilms,
Wolff-Parkins'n and White,
Marfan and Mantoux,
McCune and Albright.

Like Klinefelter, Turner,
Crigler, Najjar,
Osgood and Schlatter,
Guillain and Barre.

The doctors, the doctors, a youngster will see...
Their names, their names, so important to me!

Like Epstein, Ebstein, Ehlers and Friedrich,
Williams, Willi, Wiskott and Aldrich.

Like Hirschsprung, Hodgkin, Holman and Miller,
Duchenne, DiGeorge, Dandy and Ritter.

Like Sturge-Weber, Parkes-Weber, Osler-Weber-Rendu,
Beckwith-Wiedemann, Schwachman- Diamond tiny tots they tend to!

The doctors, the doctors, a youngster will see...
Their names, their names, a mouthful you see! ■

◀ A Sunday Morning in Mwanza, Tanzania
Jamie Miller, MS2

■ Major Groove
Eric Ton, MD/MBA Student
Video
Please visit www.uciplexus.org

Death of a Star

Adam Kalawi, MS2

A billion years ago
A star lay in its dying throws
And as it wept to empty ears
It shared its final fears:

When the end draws near
Where is it that I go?
Will I be remembered?
How am I to know?

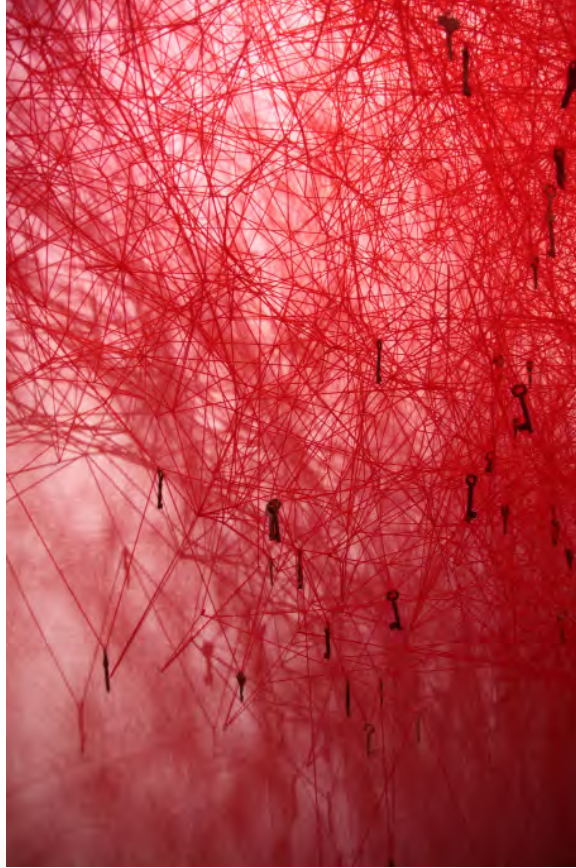
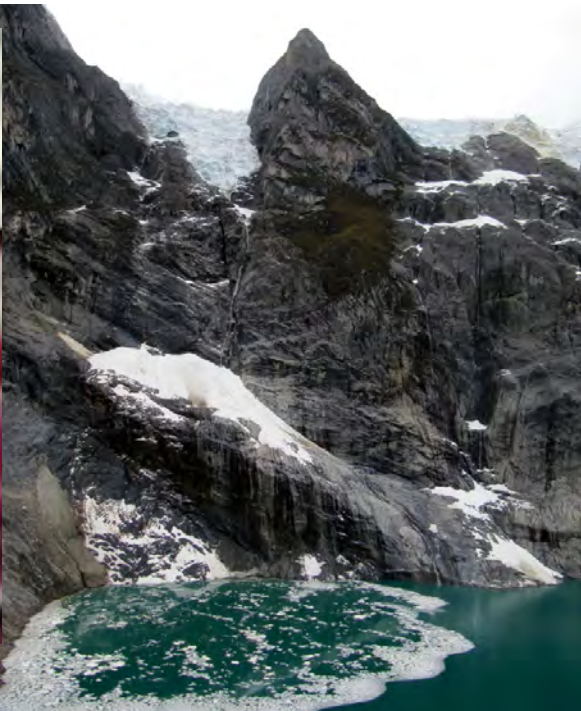
As a billion years passed
From the remaining whirl of mass
Arose a world of such great wonder
That its people began to ask:

When the end draws near
Where is it that I go?
Will I be remembered?
How am I to know? ■



◀ Nagare
Mia Shan, MS2
Digital Photomanipulation

▶ Red
Stefano Sensi, MD, PhD



◀ Ofrenda
Bradley Jacobsen, MS4

◀ Amezakura
Mia Shan, MS2
Digital Photomanipulation

Who Am I?

A pediatric annual exam reflection

Kara Percival, MS3

Who am I?

A wheel in this broken machine?

Or an advocate for my patient who can change the system?

How do I screen a teen, who's also stuck in this machine,
in 20 minutes?

How's your home life?

What's your favorite subject in school?

What do you like to do for fun?

Oh, you're being abused at home,
and bullied at school, doing drugs,
and feeling suicidal?

What can I do in our 1 minute remaining to address these issues?

Who am I?

Who should I be?

A student? A teacher? A pediatrician? A therapist? A referrer? A social worker?

A politician?

What can I do in this broken machine,

in this world seemingly driven by insurance companies and the sugar industry?

What can I do?

When do I refer?

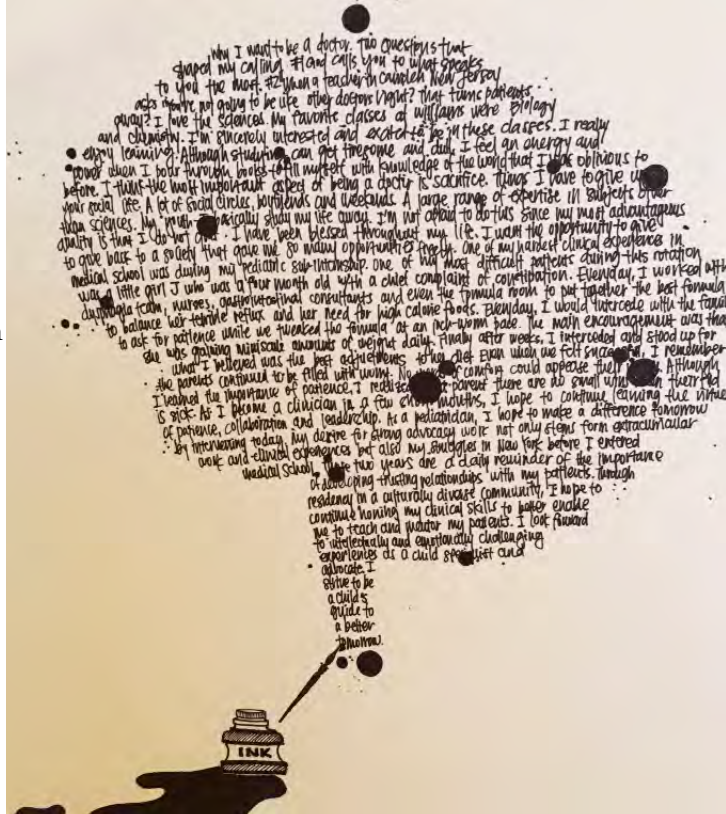
What can I do for this girl in our 1 minute remaining? ■



► Brain and Young Woman
 Esther Jun, MS4
 Marker

▼ No Title
 Michael Bernaba, MS2

◀ Maggie
 Val Engstrom, Director,
 Art for the Soul
 Pencil Drawing



Ten years ago

Soe Thein, MS2

Ten years ago,
You left me...alone
Your hope ... to touch the stars
To see your dreams in reality
You want to help the world,
I suppose that's a good thing
My hope....to be by your side,
When I wake up to cockatoos' morning
roar.

Letters I received from you,
Ranges from high alpiners to deep oceans,
You made difference in these places
Places...I couldn't imagine of being there,
Even in my dreams
I was proud...all because of you.

A cry kept calling for you – your help
You search for it...both days and nights
Dark caves
Remote villages
Snow terrains
Cracked deserts
You traversed all
All I could do – send my prayers
But, I remember you dislike pleas,
So I stopped.

Today,
You came back, astonished by the feast I
prepared,
With all your favorite food
But, I already knew that,
Ten years ago.

Suddenly,
You hear the same cry
From the well on our front porch
You forgot the dinner and dashed to the
noise
Under the wooden plank,
You saw a face, that needs saving
A Reflection

But, I already knew that,
Ten years ago. ■

▶ A Teen's Perspective
Erica Turley-De Villa,
Financial Analyst



Oscar's PICC Line

Brian Labadie, MS3

Intern: What about Oscar's PICC line?

Chief: What *about* Oscar's PICC line?

I: Well, can it come out? It's been in for 14 weeks.

C: Who wanted it in?

I: Cardiology did. And I.D. did. It's protocol.

C: What did Cards need it for?

I: To protect the valves from vegetations.

C: What did I.D. need it for?

I: To sterilize the blood and bones.

C: What do we need it for?

I: We need it out. It clotted.

C: Well, does Cards care about the clot?

I: Not as much as the valves.

C: Well, does I.D. care about the clot?

I: Not as much as the white count. And he doesn't have a white count... and his echocardiogram is clean... and it's been 14 weeks.

C: Well, does *Oscar* care about the PICC line?

I: Not as much as being allowed to go back to school... not as much as being able to play with his dog... not as much as wanting to run around... and for things to be normal again.

So, out came the PICC line. ■



◀ Startled Octopus
Kim Kennedy, CRNA,
Anesthesiology Dept.
Watercolor on Silk



- ◀ Long Beach Sunset
Kim Kennedy, CRNA, Anesthesiology Dept.
Watercolor on Silk

- ▲ A Doctor-Patient Relationship
Michael Niechayev, MS2

- ◀ Warmth
Christine Panganiban, MS4

- Dance
Tobias Dong, MSTP
Dance
Please visit www.uciplexus.org

The Silent Voice of Innocence

Jiwon Shin, MS3

Shines innocence
In his blue eyes.
He laughs and claps,
Abundantly.

He's only lived a year at most,
So he can't yet say much to me.

This mother, here -
She brought him in,
For it's her child -
She loves him so!

But there had been
A time you see,
When it was hard
To hear him cry.

He wanted this;
He wanted that;
He wanted more;
But more of what?

She hadn't slept, and she could not
find love in any part of her.

At first when he
Was born, of course,
She loved him even
When he cried.

But after hours, days and weeks,
It ripped apart - her sanity!
He would not stop,
He did not know -
His mother, here,
Was growing cold.

And there it was,
A twist, a pull,
A shake and glare -
Aimed right at him.

She looked at him
And stopped he did.

Said, "Finally,"
The woman there.

But moments passed,
And there he went -
Began again; she
Couldn't stand!

She screamed and shook
The child again,
While child inside
Yelled, "Help me now!"

Now here I am;
I see your scans.
Oh, this must all have happened thus. ■

■ **When It's Time**
Sandra Gattas & Luke Yu, MS1
Interpretive Dance
Please visit www.uciplexus.org