

UC Irvine

Plexus

Title

Plexus 2019: *Reflections*

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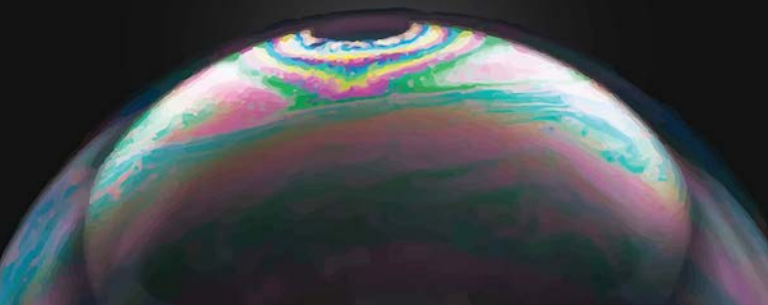
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Peer reviewed

Plexus



Winners of
the PLEXUS medical student
competitions were made possible by the
Program in Medical Humanities & Arts. Congratu-
lations to this year's winners:

Writing:

1st: Nazin Sedehi (MS3) "An Ode to My Bed"
2nd: Olivia Tsai (MS2) "Encounter"
3rd: Inbal Epstein (MS3) "Dr. Pyre"

Visual:

1st: Thalia Nguyen (MS3) "What Will My Reflection Show?"
2nd: Michael Niechayev (MS4) "Little Del Mar"
3rd: Sarah O'Dell (MS2) "Axonal Threads"

Performing Arts

1st: Matthew Sanford (Patient Account Rep, SBO, Medical Center) "First
Takes 091818"
2nd: Alex Miner (Resident physician) "Don't Stop Kicking Mommy"
3rd: Jeremy Martin and Nathan Calixto (MS4s) "Two German
Songs: Widmung (Dedication) and Auf dem Flusse (On
the River)"

PLEXUS is a student-organized
publication that showcases creative work
by medical students, physicians, faculty, patients,
and others in the medical community. Through the universal
language of art, the journal aspires to connect those who seek to
heal and to be healed.

This year, we are excited to celebrate the 20th edition of Plexus. To commemorate this milestone, we chose the theme of "Reflections" to encourage introspection on an often long but rewarding journey through the path of medicine. We feel so privileged to be a part of an incredible field with a unique legacy, allowing us to reflect on our past heritage and future legacy. While the journal submission and publication process is run by medical students, we believe that the medical humanities is a creative space open to everyone in the medical community. In keeping with last year, we continued to include wonderful submissions from students in the UCI School of Nursing, as well as graduate students from the biological sciences. Every year we are amazed by the emotions, reflections, stories, richness, and creativity of the submissions. We thank all of our submitters for their time and thought. Additionally, please find our performing arts pieces on our website, www.uciplexus.org. Previous publications and submissions are also available online.

A huge heartfelt thanks to our amazing editors, staff, and faculty for their support in making this special 20th edition possible. We would like to give special thanks to our faculty advisors Dr. Johanna Shapiro and Dr. Tan Nguyen, and Dr. Ellena Peterson (Associate Dean of Admissions & Outreach) – this journal would not have been possible without their continuous support and guidance. We hope you enjoy PLEXUS 2019 – Reflections.

LATE

by Baotran N. Vo, MD, parent

The appointment is at one
We should leave at noon
Once the packing is done
We should be there soon

We planned ahead, and gave ourselves time
But couldn't predict such horrendous crime
In the car seat, next to his milk and toy
He projectile vomits, nonchalant!

GPS predicts, we'd have ten minutes to spare
Yet once parked, we'd need ten minutes just to walk there
So now we're late late late late LATE
Because we still need three minutes to walk up the stairs!

Looking back, reflecting on this day
We've learned an open mind, comes what may
For young children will always find ways
Defiant attempts to ruin doctor visit days.

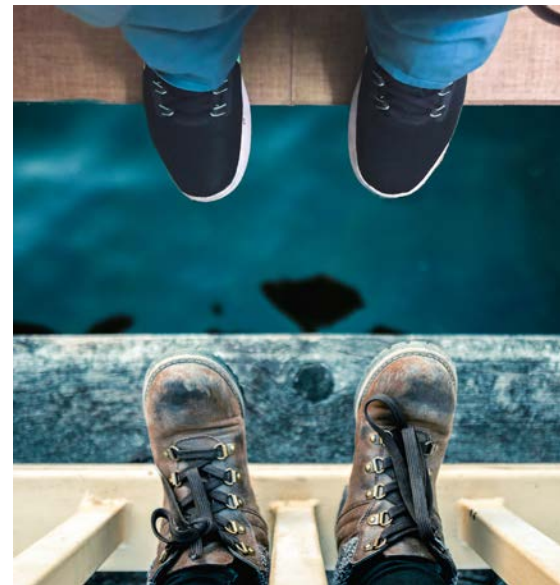
We smile, gather our stuff, and calmly sprint
Out the door we go, baby, bags in tow
For one battle is done, a few more to go
More errands to run, more appointments to show.



Tree of Willis
Nita Chen, Resident



Little Del Mar
Michael Niechayev, MS4



What Will My Reflection Show?
Thalia Nguyen, MS3

In Memoriam by Shreya Aiyar, MS2

Three summers ago, I went to Arizona to speak to your parents about your death.

You were a brilliant human, a third-year medical student with future still bright in your eyes. You helped those who were struggling to pass their classes with no expectation of thanks; gifted your time, effort, and energy to inspire those for whom the tunnel of medical school was too long to see the light.

But your mother told me about when you rotated through the inpatient psychiatry service, you called to tell her that the patients looked unloved and

uncared for – inhuman, almost – and that you were afraid your diagnosis of bipolar disorder would land you in the same place. She told me that you were afraid to tell your medical school about your mental illness for fear they would look at you differently – for fear they would think of you as less.

And then she told me that four summers ago, at 4:30 pm on a bright and sunny day, a voice on the phone told her that you were dead.

I think back to those conversations with your mother, when I was a senior in college and considering pursuing a career in medicine of my own. At

the time, I wept with your mother and promised myself I would change the way mental health is discussed and perceived in medical school. Now, I am a second-year medical student, and I can see that little has changed since you died – that the environment is as rigorous and torturous as your mother had described. When given the choice between studying for an upcoming exam or taking the time to vent to a friend about depression and anxiety, most medical students would choose to not waste time venting. But I am human too, and if not expressed healthily, my emotions destroy my ability to process that weighty knowledge of human health.

Even though I never met you, I think about you often. You gave so much, and the system did not return your care to you. But I know that you inspired me more than I thought you would: your story became a mirror to reflect mine and countless others'. And as I go through my own journey, I will keep thinking of you – the medical student with the future still bright in his eyes, who cared for others as he wanted to be cared for.



(left) Axonal Threads, (right) Heartstrings
Sarah O'Dell, MS2

She and I by Phuonganh Le, MS3

He is one of the few who hold her reflection in his gaze. A girl. Blink. A beast. Blink.

She made music in the same manner that she created her world. It was a manner which knew no manners, and dismissed all reason.

But if you insist that purpose in her callous world must have existed, it was to create the illusion of spontaneous generation. She sat at the piano bench with eyes closed, self-control relinquished, hands without a master, and notes spawning from nothing. There, she made melodies of maggots crawling out of the flesh once belonging to a life she never intended on taking- never thought would be harmed because of her empty decisions.

So on and on went the reckless runs and capricious crescendos, drowning out any voices pleading with her to stop confusing naive with cowardly, and spontaneous with irresponsible. It was far from the beautiful, raw art she wanted so desperately to convey. When he came along she shivered in the nudity of her childish compositions. For the first time, she wanted cellos and oboes and bells. She wanted symphonies!

His silent eyes spoke volumes. And when she dared to gaze back, I saw her for who I had truly been.



Singing Inside the MRI Machine

by Johanna Shapiro, faculty

Inside the MRI machine
my nose an inch from the roof
I hear the tech say
Ready?

The noise
alternating between jackhammer
and drill
is so soul splitting
I wonder how I will survive
the next hour

Then I realize
the frequency
is the same as
a musical note
I listen more carefully

Very softly,
So the tech won't think I'm crazy
I imitate the sound
the pitch changes
I hum along again it shifts
and so do I

I am emboldened
I no longer care about the tech
I try the major third
then the minor

The machine is singing
I sing along
We are in harmony
machine and I

When I emerge,
I give the cylinder a pat
Thanks, I say not to the tech
As I leave, I am humming our
song



(top) Now Take A Deep Breath - Sunober Siddiqi, MS3
(bottom) Two Halves Make A Whole - Sunober Siddiqi, MS3
(middle) Tangible Hope - Christine Pham, MS3



(top) California Sunset - Joseph Conovaloff, MS2;
(bottom) Dark and Light - Joseph Conovaloff, MS2;
(right) Memento - Michael Niechayev, MS4





As the Sun kisses the Flower
by Chalal Rajaram, faculty

As the Sun kisses the flower,
Let my thoughts hover;
Of the year that has gone by.
What, when, how and why?

The people and friends matter;
When the sky is clear, when clouds gather.
During typhoon or hurricane,
Much more during the rain.

The rain brings new life around.
Where birds, leaves, flowers abound;
Too much rain then landslides
After the fires, parching the hillsides.

Nature, happiness and sorrow
What stories shall one really borrow?
It all goes together, happens side by side
Face it my friend, there's no place to hide.

A third birthday without you dear
Face life and go forward without fear.
Such has been the way forever
Birth, life and death and ties to sever.

(1/13/2018)



*(clockwise from top left) On Track - Avital Fischer, MS3;
(left) Behind Van Gogh's Eyes and (right) Red Flowers -
Rolanda Engstrom, Art for the Soul;
Noontime - Lalaine Watson, Art for the Soul;
Humble Bee - Khalid Raja, father of MS4;
Red and Green - Stefano Sensi, faculty;
Reaching - Priyanka Sharma, MS2*

Antarctic Neutrino

by *Andrei Novac, M.D., faculty*

Antarctica, a name of shadows,
The stage of life when being is a form of energy.
A labyrinth of mindless disruptions,
Dwelling on details of a world without a soul,
It all set loose my wish to search for particles of hope.

Neutrino, dimension that coexists but never reaches
independent reality.
No awareness, no acknowledgement of being.
A name given by science.
A zodiac without prediction of the future.

Pure energy of living in the present,
Neutrino, powerful, ubiquitous, invisible.
"N" lives in us, a changing shadow,
Generations regenerating ahead of us.



SeaFeather
Rhonda Reeves, staff

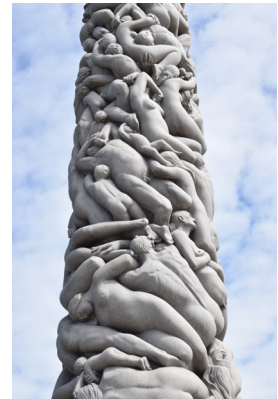
Both Sides Now

Nathan Calixto, MS4



Tangled

Danielle Zezoff, MS2



Southern Ocean Floor

by *Andrei Novac, M.D., faculty*

I never wanted to be seen,
Acknowledging lines of time upon my arrival.
The ocean floor, remote and unforgiving,
Remembers all but never tells.

It keeps decanted memories
For perpetuity to remember.
Acts and facts can now stand
When all are too eager to forget.

The floor, where great grand Mother Earth found respite
A permanent refuge here, in the power of darkness.
Sitting in silence and never forgetting
Watching and waiting, for us to return to our senses.

Memory is a goddess of time, a sacred energy,
Perpetually feeding regeneration.
Hardly acknowledged for its essence but kept,
In molecules of soils and cells of life,

Like ancient Cassandra, harboring tales for the future.



On the Other Side, Part 1
by Amish Dangodara, faculty

Who will carry my legacy?
Who will tell of my success?
This purring ball of fur?
These sad puppy eyes in a cage?
Who there shared my fate?

Would I rescue them, or they me?
I took with me a cat and a puppy
To make my house a home,
These two children now my own,
Immaculate, born without a mate,

Filled my house, such as it was,
This room on four wheels
With a corner for meals,
And fully equipped for my trip,
My escape from the rat race.

The essentials were stored away,
The penthouse suite now devoid
Of the valuables sold to the rodents,
Still caught in the maze of seeking joy
In glamour and expensive toys.

Gone are those days of superficial misguided goals.
I set out on my journey to make myself whole:
I dove beneath the sea and petted a whale.
I climbed mountains impossible to scale.
I met many strangers, now all friends...

Isn't that what really matters in the end?
How to find happiness is what I read
And did all the things the books said.
Gratitude does make life dearer;
I hardly recognized who's in the mirror.

My hair is now curly when it never was,
Covering the tattoo that hides beneath,
The only décor for my once bald scalp,
The floral pattern that none can now see,
Still there, permanent, just to remind me.

That was over five years ago,
And I was alone, or so I chose to be.
Yes, there were friends and family,
But mother would just smother
And would not let me breathe.

(left) Southern Comfort
Kristen Zapanta, CRNA Staff

Father, never close,
Met with his own woes
And imposed by passing away
At the most inopportune time,
But I suppose, on him, I never relied.

So I called upon friends to celebrate
And wore nothing but a robe to show
My perfect breasts, proudly exposed,
Large, round, firm, and pendulous,
Enough to make any woman jealous.

With cleavage deep and nipples pert,
Excited by all the attention, fully alert,
My beautiful boobs looked perfectly smooth,
But one was not as perfect as it seemed,
A tumor lied silently in wait beneath.

That was over five years ago,
And I'm still not even fifty years old.
I had already endured the chemo
And its effect of self-neglect,
Then it was time to resect one breast.

There was a 49% chance of survival,
But I heard it was a 51% chance of death.
Just five years, and how many wasted in fear?
Even the best experts treating me could not answer;
They did not know how to heal more than cancer.

I was an executive of a multi-million dollar firm.
I had retirement plans, savings, money to burn,
But experts had no advice for what to do –
Should I quit my job, sell my home,
Suffer more treatment, or the world to roam?

As I suppose was my destiny and my fate,
It was not as easy as they had me anticipate.
The pain was not minimal because of neuropathy,
There was an infection that wasn't supposed to be,
Hours became days, and days turned to weeks.

There was reconstructive surgery
And endless appointments to make,
Months of doctors' visits, blood tests, x-rays.
There were support group visits to meet
Others who were just like me... dying.

But there I was, still trying
To be the 49% as I watched others die,
Others who were 81% supposed to survive.
Where were those who once jumped like dancers
To help me, those friends, now weary of cancer?

I spent all my savings to see the world.
I sold my house, expended my friends,
I distanced my family I couldn't stand
When I was sick and all they did was nag.
I know what matters in life – not the job I had.

And were it not for these kids
Who still make me smile,
And on me still depend,
Were they not here to defend,
I may have slipped into a peaceful end.

I was not supposed to be alive –
They said 49% chance I would survive,
That's less than half – I did the math,
But here I am without a plan,
Unable to decide, on the other side.

The diagnosis worse than death was "cure."
No one sees me as vulnerable anymore,
As no one can see my tattoo.
I am more alone now than I ever was,
Isolated by pride, on the other side.

Of Loss and Redemption

by Chalat Rajaram, faculty

A borrowed pen to write this poem
As I sit on the plane, contemplate
Prayers completed for all of Them
The moment past, words to create.

Centuries old prayers, rituals
Vedic origins and Sanskrit hymns
Bereavement, many hundred falls
Peace now as healing beckons.

The most sacred of Rivers
So much a part of this journey.
Reflections of the soul, mirrors
Whatever the feeling, let it be.

The mighty flowing Ganges
Jamuna, Varuna Assi flowing into
Not enough, even a hundred dips
To heal other souls, more to do.

After all this effort, a look back.
Time to unwind now, and reflect.
Memories, stories begin to stack
Different emotions to be felt.

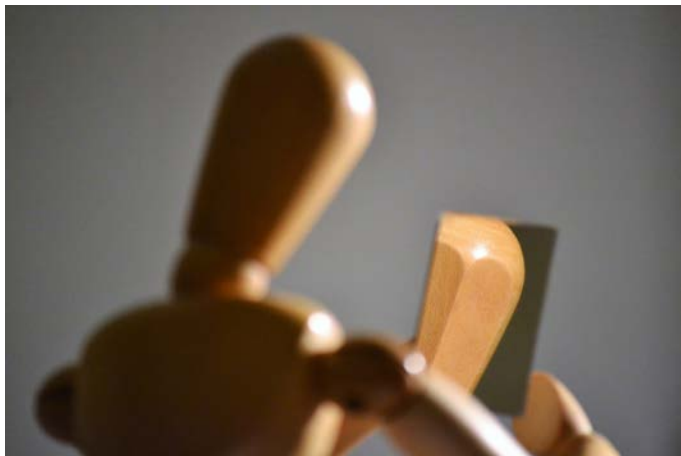
Leaving behind Varanasi, Gaya
Memories of an ancient time.
Traditions steeped high, so far
Sounds fade, hymns, a distant chime.

Of love, friendship, marriage
Of Parents, siblings, families
Repeated over, at every age.
Life events bringing one down to knees.

(9/2/17 flying over Varanasi)



Reflection
Stuart A. Green, faculty



Shooter's Abscess

by Jeffrey Suchard, faculty

Gary's complaint seemed pretty routine.

Gary was a homeless man who came to the Emergency Department for evaluation of a painful sore on his left arm. To be precise, the sore was located in his left antecubital fossa, the hollow area on the opposite side of the elbow. This is an area from which blood is frequently drawn for lab tests and where IV lines are commonly started, since there are some large veins accessible just under the skin. These are also the veins most commonly used by intravenous drug abusers, at least until they become scarred down from overuse and alternate veins must be sought. These injection sites can sometimes become infected, an "occupational hazard" of the intravenous drug abuser. Abscess formation in the antecubital fossae as a complication of drug abuse is common enough that it is called a "shooter's abscess". Since most people are right-handed, it follows that most shooter's abscesses will be on the left side, and this is what I presumed Gary had.

The lesion was red, slightly raised up from the surrounding skin, and about the size of a silver dollar. I was impressed that it was so nearly perfectly round. In the very center, the lesion was coming to a "point", meaning that the subcutaneous collection of pus looked like it was about to burst forth. Overall, it looked like a magnified zit, and exactly what I would expect from a shooter's abscess.

So I asked Gary if he had been injecting drugs. He gave me a puzzled look. I responded by explaining in my least judgmental tone that people who inject drugs into their arm veins often develop skin infections and abscesses right where he had his lesion. Gary denied injecting any drugs, and suggested the possibility that he may have been bitten by bugs, since he slept outdoors. He offered as additional proof his left foot, which had two red, raised linear lesions on the instep.

I told Gary that I intended to perform an I&D (incision and drainage) of his abscess, whatever its cause, since that is the indicated treatment. He agreed, and I proceeded to clean the skin, inject some local anesthetic, and I picked up a scalpel to make a skin incision.

From prior experience incising abscesses, I fully expected this one to spurt out pus when I cut into it. Abscesses always seem to be more extensive than they first appear, and I've been surprised before at getting several times the volume of pus than initially expected. I cut Gary's lesion open about 1-cm, then waited, but nothing happened.

With my gloved fingers I pulled the edges of the wound open, thinking maybe this would make the pus come out. Peering into to the wound, I thought I saw a couple of gas bubbles in the tissue. This surprised me much more than the lack of a pus geyser. There is no benign reason to find gas underneath someone's skin. The presence of subcutaneous gas is a marker of severe infection; indeed, it is the sine qua non of "gas gangrene". A near-synonym that is used more frequently nowadays for this condition is "necrotizing fasciitis", which is a true surgical emergency. The patient must be taken to the operating room for aggressive debridement of the necrotic tissue to prevent rapid spread of the infection, resultant septic shock, and extremely high mortality. But Gary didn't look particularly ill, and it was this inconsistency between the presence of gas bubbles and how stable he appeared that confused me. I certainly didn't think he needed to be admitted or even get intravenous antibiotics, let alone need extensive surgical debridement. Anyway, in my continued quest for pus, I squeezed the lesion between my thumbs like a big zit, and that's when a few small globules of liquid mercury dribbled out.

It was clearly metal, and it was clearly liquid, so it obviously had to be elemental mercury; there is nothing else it could have been. The "gas bubbles" I thought I had seen were actually mercury globules that my mind misinterpreted for lack of proper context.

So I asked the obvious follow-up question, "When did you inject mercury in your arm?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, that's mercury there, and that's your arm, and that's the hole in your arm I made where the mercury came out. So, when did you inject the mercury in your arm?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"The only way that mercury got into your arm is if it was injected. I already told you that I suspected you had been injecting drugs, so it's not that much of a reach to suspect that you injected mercury instead."

"Well...maybe somebody came along when I was sleeping and injected me with mercury." This is when I decided not to take anything else Gary told me at face-value. I ordered X-rays of Gary's left arm and foot. Both showed collections of metallic densities in the soft tissues.

I admitted Gary to the hospital. Fortunately, this hospital had an inpatient toxicology service so that he would get optimal care for his unusual condition. The primary treatment for nearly any toxic exposure is to end that exposure, if possible. Although heavy metal poisoning can be treated with chelating drugs to bind up the metal and improve its elimination from the body via urination, no amount of chelation will help if there is still a large deposit of the mercury in his body. Therefore, surgeons were consulted to debride as much mercury as possible from his arm and foot. During the hospitalization, small scattered mercury globules were also discovered by X-rays throughout the GI tract.

Gary maintained his innocence in the matter for a long time. Interestingly though, he was able to provide a detailed account to the psychiatric consultant of how one would extract mercury from thermometers and fluorescent light bulbs.

Thank You
by Wonne Lu, MS2



(clockwise, from top) The Lone Star - Joseph Conovaloff, MS2;
Black and White - Stefano Sensi, faculty; Dedication - Kristen Zapanta, CRNA Staff

How do I even begin to express my feelings for you.
You, lying there on cold metal,
draped by a paper-thin sheet.
You, who used to feel warm golden rays caress your skin,
now with only a fluorescent shine above to keep you company.

Gratitude. Humility. Awe.
Words, whose meanings only barely scratch the surface of what I feel,
what I have learned from your generosity,
your ultimate, selfless gift.

I walked in that first day with my middle school Converse,
eyes wide,
blinking furiously against the fumes of formaldehyde,
sympathetic system on overdrive.

You did not know me,
will not know me,
have no idea who I am.
And yet,
almost 7 months later, I still feel that invisible bond
forever connecting me to you.

Thank you for your patience,
when, with shaking hands, I made my first jagged incision.

Thank you for the silent encouragement during particularly brutal days,
when I wanted to rip off the white coat, and
when I questioned if I am meant to be here.

Lingual nerve of V3, or lingual branch of IX?
The air can often feel suffocating, but when I stand back up,
there you are, still, gently reminding me that
the left recurrent laryngeal nerve wraps around the arch of the aorta.
That the serratus posterior superior muscle elevates the ribs.
That there is a reason we are here, together, now.

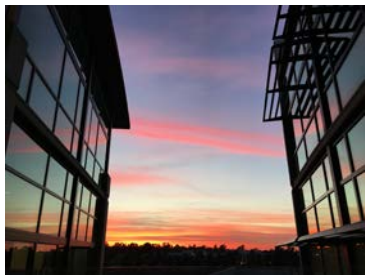
Thank you.
Two words that barely sum up the magnitude and depth of my gratitude.
Thank you for trusting me.
For believing in me.
For helping me pursue my dreams.
For mentoring me.

Thank you.

Cotton Candy Sunsets
Priyanka Sharma, MS2



Our Lane
Danielle Zeff, MS2



On the Other Side, Part 2

by Amish Dangodara, faculty

There was something alluring about him,
Not his physique or his mind,
Not his manner or his nature kind,
But perhaps his artistry that spoke
To the artist in me.

He spoke honestly, without guile,
He was serious, hardly a smile.
I only met him once before
Through a mutual friend,
But wished to know him more.

And there were things I longed to do,
Something grander than mother and wife.
Over fifty years had gone by
And I had already seen the world
As a young woman and little girl.

My father was an ambassador
And we spent years abroad,
Exposed to every land and culture,
But now tethered by husband and son
To lead a life of chores and humdrum.

He does his part, works very hard,
To pay the bills and build a future.
He even gives me a break once a week
So father and son can bond and relieve me,
But what should I do, all alone?

I took up painting to occupy the time
And express my creativity, who I am –
Is that why I am drawn to this man?
He writes poetry, beautiful, not flowery and sweet,
But serious, pensive, thought-provoking, and deep.

There are things I still long to see and do
But he has his interests, and not all are mine too.
Am I selfish? Why shouldn't I be?
It was four years ago I was told, of five,
That I had 49% chance to be alive.

Another year of waiting in panic and fear
To learn if the cancer is all clear.
Another year of tests, squeezing of breasts
Between cold steel plates for inconclusive x-rays,
Counting each minute, every hour, every day.

Another year of wondering if every ache or pain
Is a sign the cancer has spread, waiting in dread.
Another year of wondering if memory lapse
Is chemo's scar or cancer progressed,
Another year, maybe less?

So am I to be a perfect wife and mother?
Am I supposed to be free of scandal?
Who am I trying to impress? Why should I care?
So what if I flaunt propriety to befriend a single man?
I don't want an affair, just a companion for what he won't share.

I have passions that we do not have in common:
Foreign films remind me of my joyful youth,
I am inspired by the bravery of players on a stage,
I am delighted by culinary masters expressing art in food.
I find his understanding of the world speaks the truth.

And is it a dangerous path I take
To share deep thoughts with a poet,
Not my mate?
Is it more dangerous
Than what cancer would take?

I have seen them die,
Those with better odds, those once my friends
In that cursed support group I can no longer attend.
She is free over five years now and still can't stand,
Secretly speaking of suicide – did she not plan?

I won't be her on the other side.
While he is buried in work with plan B,
A life with my son – but without me,
Am I just supposed to wait? What is fate?
I will call him after all and test my plan...



(top) Another Day - Olivia Tsai, MS2;
(middle) The Two Faces of Nancy - Nancy Webster,
Art for the Soul;
(bottom) Sunset and Dogs - Ian Jang, MPH student

The Beauty of Nature
Lalaine Watson, Art for the Soul



Golden Reflec
Ajoy Nair Sharma



Today
by Olivia Tsai, MS2

Is it a fear of death or a fear of dying?
Are we afraid to say goodbye?
Do we fear what lies ahead...
Or what we'll leave behind?

Perhaps it's the feeling of being uprooted,
Away from all we've pursued and created,
Leaving nothing but an emptiness –
A void that suggests we once existed.

Is it a fear of the unknown?
Or perhaps because we know too much.
We've seen, we've learned, we've read, we've heard
And now we fear we've reached our turn.
Or is it regret?

People we should have loved,
Things we should have tried,
Words we should have said – or shouldn't have.
Sights we should have seen,
Sounds we should have heard,
Places we should have gone – or shouldn't have.

But what difference does it make?
Dwelling on things we'll never know.
Lamenting those future regrets.
Wasting what time we have.

What lies ahead we do not know,
But what lives now we know too well.
Should we not grasp what's here today
Before it is too late?

(clockwise from top left) The Magnitude of Nature - Ralph V. Clayman, faculty;
Fall Foliage at Jiuzhai - Chen Yuncai - staff; Dawn in Yellowstone - Jennifer Hoff, RN;
Thoughts of a Survivor - Henry Nguyen, Art for the Soul; Nurture - Bootran N. Vo, M.D., faculty

Refiner's Fire

by Daniel Kim, MS3

The goldsmith sits with his eyes fixated on the furnace,
For the time necessary for refining must be precise.
Not a second less or a second more,
Unless the gold is to be lost as a sacrifice.

The furnace is alive and raging, but hidden away
With a fire that takes on forms beyond the possible.
The gold has no choice but to submit to the flames,
As it melts to purity within the crucible.

Feeling as if there is no choice but to succumb
In the furnace moments, we feel surrounded and helpless
But there is an unexplainable trust and hope that we can experience,
For there is a greater purpose embedded in the process.

Our trials and tribulations do not come at random
But we may be tested beyond what we desire.
As gold emerges purer and stronger than ever,
Perhaps a certain measure of suffering may be required.

How can we learn patience without lengths of frustration?
How can we learn endurance without something to endure?
How can we learn strength without moments of weakness?
How can we become better without learning to mature?

Can gold be refined apart from the refiner's fire?
Can diamonds be formed without pressure and heat?
Can skilled mariners be trained apart from rough seas?
Can we be truly forged apart from our victories and defeats?

We are a reflection of what we have overcome,
The battles we have won and lost.
But don't forget the fire we may be in now,
Or lose sight of the brilliance we may become.

Then what indicates the end of the process?
When is it complete and ready to be shown?
Only when the refiner pulls out the heated metal,
And finally sees his own image in the gold.



Sea of Sand
Michael Niechayev, MS4



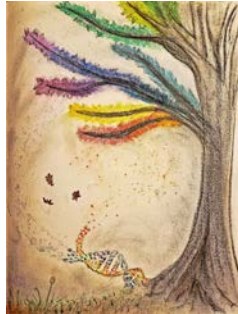
To Cultivate an Eye
by Sarah O'Dell, MS2

"How long were they waiting?"
Bright yellow and purple-hearted,
Five orchid blooms
Lost socks in the laundry room,
Unfolded in the laundry bottles
And no one saw.

Her disbelief of unseen flowers
Flows over my own sighted lapses:
Lost socks and lotion bottles
Invisible, even in focus.

How do we prepare –
For each drop of the vision,
Every luminous surprise
Blooming under our breath?

(clockwise from top left)
Santa Monica Sunset - Jennifer Hoff, RN;
Thursday Afternoon on the Red Rock Canyons of
Nevada - Johnny Le, MS1;
Mask of the Young Practitioner - Daniel Meller, MS3;
Fisherman's Cove - Ian Jang, MPH student;
Pondering in Venice - Priyanka Sharma, MS2;
Half Moon Bay - Ian Jang, MPH student;
Passion Blooms - Baotran N. Vo, M.D., faculty



Gentleman from Puebla

by Francisco Cerda, MS2

You're not supposed to be here.
It's not allowed.
How did these words feel?
As I translate to you
Rejection
Cold like a weighted steel blade
As it pierces your skin

The Gentleman from Puebla
His stitches detail his route
From deserts to mountains
From suffering to brokenness
A family is left behind
For hope found in the bottle
Because work had left you

I translate words I don't agree with
But I interpret what is in my heart
A journey to recovery
We are intertwined like a sailor's knot
Tenso con nuestro lenguaje
Your body heals while your heart breaks
You begin to walk
While you face the demons

You belong here.
A place to heal
Recover, redeem
Weep for what you have given up
Your mother's bedside
Her last breaths
Not knowing
Where her son is

Our stories are forever one
I translate your care
And interpret your truth
I clean your wounds
You clean my soul
We celebrate
A place to live
Sober
Married

I help tell your story
So I never forget mine

Acquaintance

by Olivia Tsai, MS2

Perhaps we need to first be mortal
Before we really live forever.
To see the needs and gaps of others
And fill them with our next endeavor.

Perhaps there's no such thing as leaving The
world and those we loved behind... We live
through those endlessly chasing Our dreams to
give and serve mankind.

Perhaps the world has no real strangers. Only
those who've touched our lives – Teachers,
mentors, difference makers Ensuring that our
future thrives.

Through time
And purpose...
We've already met.



(clockwise from top left) Parkinson's Disease. Pride In Her Residual Capabilities - Baatran N. Vo, M.D., faculty;
DNA: The First Molecule to Discover Itself - Roy Almog, MS2;
Lines of Thought - Joan Campbell, M.D., faculty;
Serengeti Snooze - Danielle Zeroff, MS2;
Pre-Op - Diana Pearre, Gyn-Onc Fellow;
Double Helix - Olivia Tsai, MS2;

An Ode to My Bed

by Nazin Sedehi, MS3

Shall I compare thee...?

I'd try but I can't
My ice cream time, partner in crime
What makes it hard to leave,
And delight when I return in the eve
Nothing comes close to you

Soft support after long days,
You bring me out of my haze
You lull me to sleep,
With all the benefits neurologists say I will reap

Never change, dear bed
Or I would no longer know where to rest my
Weary, overthinking,
dammit-I-forgot-to-recheck-those-Q6-hour-labs
Head

(left) mountains-
to-see - Jeremy
Rouanet; MS1;
(right) Reality Check
- Stefano Sensi,
Neurology faculty



Trust

by Steven Cramer, faculty

You don't trust me
I know
And you don't want to be here
In the next room a thin woman, who will not leave this hospital alive, lets out a low moan
I repeat that I'm here to help, that here's the scoop
You say nothing, reveal nothing
The waiting room is overflowing, with children crying as they have since the time of the Pharaohs
You scan the room slightly as if to find a way out, during which
I wonder to myself Will I see you again in 2 or 3 weeks, overdosed, or maybe bleeding from a skull wound
Will you take the pills? I would give them to my own sister
I confide
Which does not sway you, perhaps
your sister got you blamed for things she did or took your coat in winter or beat you in secret
A man with a shattered arm, two doors down, wails, all at once, and
We both look in his direction
Together, for a moment





Encounter
by Olivia Tsai, MS2

You look at me, expectant.
I return your gaze.
You want answers before questions,
I prefer the other way.
You clear your throat – will you begin?
No...
I suppose I'll start.

You wonder if I'm just like the others.
I ponder what makes you unique.
I'm one in a million to you,
You're one in a million to me.

Today is our first meeting,
It could likely be our last –
If we can work this out,
And put these troubles in our past.

It's hard to become familiar, In fifteen minutes' time.
But we'll do our best –
Two perspectives,
Two humans,
Trying to find a solution In this clinical exam room.

And thus begins this patient encounter.



(far-left) Bold Strokes - Lalaine Watson, Art for the Soul;
(right) This MD is Shared - Nita Chen, Resident



Dr. Pyre
by Inbal Epstein, MS3

His skin was as white as his fresh coat. His jaw chiseled, his features ageless. He was beautiful in a way that a statue is, exquisite, pristine, but also distant, almost lifeless. He was a great doctor who seemed to possess knowledge beyond his years, stoic and unflappable when the occasion called for it. And if phlebotomy tubes seemed to go missing every so often, well, that was a small price to pay for his expertise in hematology.

Dr. Pyre only ever worked the night shift. That wasn't a problem, as it wasn't in high demand, but rumor was no one had seen him leave the hospital. Instead, as day broke he'd descend into the subterranean warrens of the radiology basement and disappear. A nurse said once she got lost amongst the nooks of the reading rooms and pulled back the cloth to find him lying stone-still, arms crossed, staring motionless at the ceiling. Not sleeping, maybe not even breathing, but just lying.

Every so often a corpse would be found bled dry in the morgue for no apparent reason. It was chalked up to new residents or a mistaken procedure, but what could never be explained were the symmetric marks found on the necks and extremities. "Unspecified puncture marks, likely of rodent origin" was the official documentation. The pathologist bumped into Dr. Pyre late one night in the cafeteria and asked his opinion, as he was knowledgeable about so many topics, but he just shrugged and gestured to his tomato soup slowly rotating in the microwave. "It tastes better warm."

Once, a nursing assistant with a bedpan tripped and upended its contents onto Dr. Pyre's immaculate coat. Terrified, she prostrated herself at his feet in shame, apologetic, humbled, the scene captured and distorted

(left) Rex
Kristen Zapanta, CRNA staff

on the gleaming surface of the offending vessel. Dr. Pyre brushed it off without batting an eye, and came back ten minutes later pristine as always as if it had never happened. The assistant, so overwhelmed with gratitude, didn't realize until later that while she could see every feature of the room stretched across the bedpan's surface in grotesque distortion, she couldn't for the life of her recall seeing his stoic face reflected back at her on the metal surface.

Tales of the only time he'd been seen disturbed whispered among staff and trainees. A middle aged female, the holistic type with big glasses and a generous helping of beads, came in septic from a cat bite on her leg. "Well my little Mitzy, she gets so jealous of the others, she came right in and took a big bite. Of course, nature is the best medicine, so I slapped a poultice on it a few days back, but I think it's getting worse..." Dr. Pyre nodded, donned a pair of gloves, and peeled back the bandage. And what a bandage it was! The thick layer of honey that was the base of the poultice intermingled freely with cloudy yellowing pus, the wound red and inflamed, and the stench! The mix of rotting flesh, feasting bacteria, and an unmistakable whiff of garlic escaped from beneath the cloth wrapping and filled the room, causing everyone to recoil in disgust. Dr. Pyre turned even paler, if possible, swallowed deeply, and left the room without excusing himself, throwing his gloves in the biohazard waste along the way. He wasn't seen in the hospital for a week after that, claiming a bad case of the flu.

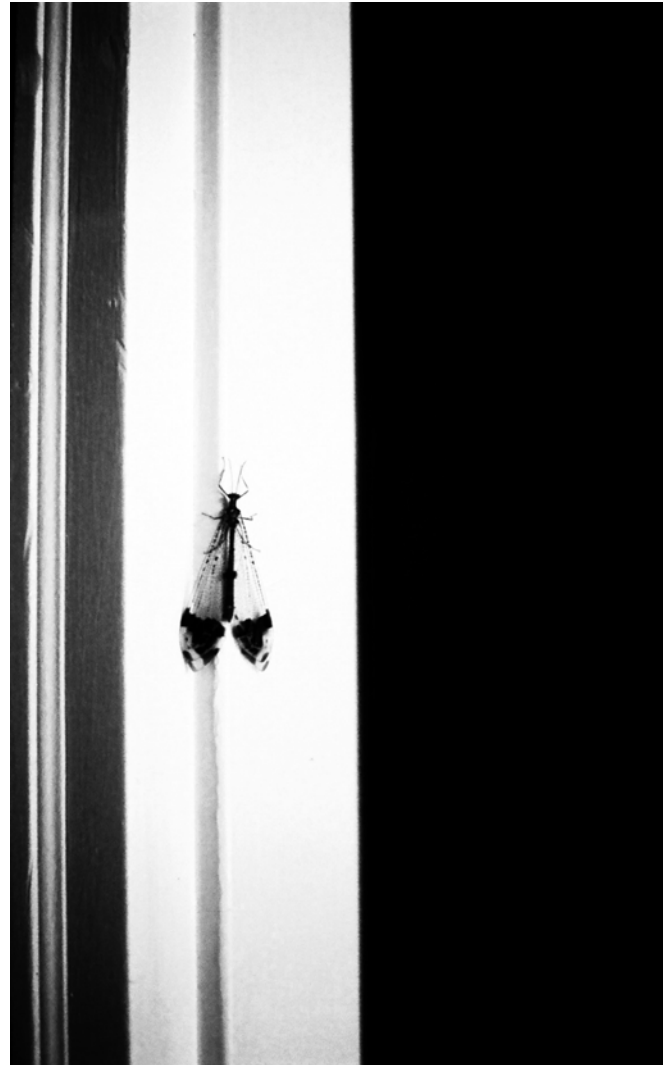
Though friends with few, he was respected by many, which is why his untimely demise shocked the hospital. One of the residents had received as a gift his great-grandfather's old reflex hammer. The handle of the hammer was shiny silver, nearly one hundred years old, with a point came to a sharp tip. Perhaps it was sharper than your average hammer, but what happened next was agreed to be a freak accident. A resident was eliciting the patellar reflex of a young lady with Dr. Pyre overseeing. Her brisk, spastic reflex caused the resident to drop the hammer, which bounded off the shin of the patient and flew in a glistening arc towards Dr. Pyre's chest. Surely, what should have happened next was a modest impact, some stunned shock at the event, and then laughs all around at the ridiculousness of the situation. But instead, the hammer buried itself tip first through his chest, the flesh around it seeming to blacken as though burned. Dr. Pyre stared down in stunned silence, stiffened, and collapsed.

Nearly the entire staff, young and old, attended his funeral and shared stories. No one seemed to recall a time without him at the hospital, not even Gertrude who had worked in the cafeteria for over 40 years and fondly recalled his preference for hamburgers "so rare they might still be alive." No family spoke, though were a few figures who might have been relatives who stood quietly in heavy cloaks and mumbled in an unrecognized language. Dr. Pyre's will specified a spacious crypt at the very back of the cemetery, and there was a moment of chaos when a dozen bats flew out of it the crisp morning air. And when all was said and done, all that remained was a dark stone building looming against the sky, with a plaque that read,

Dr. Ivan Pyre
Unknown – 2018



(left) 24 Hours of a Busy Resident - Nita Chen, Resident; (right) on the wall, off the wall - Jeremy Rouanet, MS1



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