

Out of Hours

The art in general practice

How many of us still pursue our creative interests to the same degree that we did on entering medical school; and how many of us slowly abandoned our passions as our thoughts and time became filled with medicine, with exams, with patients, and with the never-ending guidelines?

The Vale of Trent Faculty of General Practice holds an annual prize for medical students to inspire the new generation of GPs at an early stage in their careers. It is usually a written submission. This year, knowing the increasing pressures we are all facing and the realisation that the printed word is constantly being forced upon us from an increasing number of sources, we decided to re-inspire our faculty by calling for an 'artistic submission for the prize'. The title was *General Practice, My Experience So Far* and the call was for 'any artistic medium'. We had hoped for inspiration. The standard of entries was phenomenal and the judging difficult, but an absolute pleasure. Rather than a single winner, which is the usual prize each year we chose an overall winner and six runners-up.

The overall winner is a poem based on miscommunication in the consultation. We have all experienced this in one form or another, but to hear a beautifully written poem depicting this is awe-inspiring. The poem is best read out loud with one person reading the right hand column and someone else the left side.

Albert Einstein famously said, 'Imagination is more important than knowledge'. As GPs we need both, but we need to free the imagination, to remember it exists and to fully allow it to flourish. The runners-up all allowed their minds to be free, and the entries were diverse. They included a sculpture on the theme of wasted medication and patient-centred care, a handmade dress inspired by the red blood cell, and a bright collage charting key themes in one student's medical life.

As an artist you have to trust your judgement and your creativity. As a GP it is the same. We live with uncertainty every day and as GPs we have our knowledge, we have our instinct, and we balance the uncertainty. That's our biggest skill. Open up your creativity, open up your mind and remember the freedom.

Gail Allsopp,

Vice Chair Faculty Vale of Trent, GP Nottinghamshire.

The art will be displayed at The Royal College of General Practitioners, Euston Square, London from September 2013.

Both winners have given permission for their entries to be published.

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The Other Side of the Story by Laura Pugh

*Wonder if I'm next...
Not sure what to say.
I have to do it this time,
This has to be the day
I'll tell him what I'm thinking
And he'll help me find a way
To live.*

*I'll complain of something simple
To see if he seems kind ...
But he looks so distracted,
How can I say what's on my mind?
Should I tell him what I'm thinking?
No ... OK, I'll tell him if he asks,
I want,
To die.*

*I could go back tomorrow,
Maybe I could try again.
But that's really once too often,
It would just be in vain.
I know that he can't help me,
He'll just think I'm insane.
I'm going home
To kill myself
I can't stand the pain.*

*Let me see who's next ...
Oh no, not her again.
What can she want this time,
Another made-up pain?
I don't know what she's thinking,
Coming each and every day
For nothing.*

*I knew it would be this,
There's nothing there to find.
But yet she looks so scared,
I wish she'd say what's on her mind.
How can I know what she's thinking?
Maybe I should ask
But no,
The moment's passed.*

*She'll be back tomorrow,
I'll definitely ask her then.
Something's going on there
But I need much more than ten
To start that conversation
Who knows where it will end.
I'm moving on,
Next patient...
Oh no, not him again.*

How Long is a Piece of String ...? Laura Douglas

