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.