Hitting Targets

Practising care is an emotional business. Healthcare professionals witness and attempt to treat, or relieve, suffering of many kinds. However, many find that there is little space within day-to-day clinical practice to reflect — for emotions to ‘find their thought’ — far less ‘thought to find words’. In fact, this may be actively discouraged.

Here, we present a short poem that Caroline (first author), a healthcare researcher, created from an interview with Simon [second author], a GP. The poem is constructed entirely from extracts of Simon’s own words taken from an interview carried out as part of a study of cardiovascular disease prevention in general practice.

The poem spotlights tensions in Simon’s work as he is torn between hitting preventive targets for managing population health and responding to individual patients’ needs as they present in frontline practice.

Hitting Targets
I love hitting targets
I’m really good at hitting targets
It’s important that you hit the targets
That’s how you’re perceived
And we can do it

I feel torn
I want to hit the targets; I want to be a patient-centred GP
Oh shit, my diabetic figures are really bad
We’re coming to the end of the year
I must sort out a few more people
I’m tempted

She wanted to talk about her anaemia
The nurse appointments are fully booked, it was now or never
It comes up in pink boxes, it’s like someone shouting
I hate myself for doing it
I stuck her on the bloody couch
Her pulses were fine
It wasn’t in the slightest bit appropriate
I wanted to hit our figures
She would be another one towards the target

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REFERENCES