

The Patient/Professional Relationship

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The relationship between healthcare professionals and patients is, of course, an utterly crucial one. The press jumps on things when this relationship goes wrong – quite rightly, because we are dealing with people's lives. But millions of times a day, throughout the NHS, these relationships work, give comfort, calm fears, supply hope, and share laughter. It's an awful lot easier to write powerfully about problems than it is to write movingly about when things go well – so most poets home in on when things go wrong. But we'd very much welcome poems from you about when and how this relationship *works* – especially when it works for both sides. We hereby challenge you to send us poems that *celebrate* this relationship! (Just as Elaine Trevitt's poem *'Dr G meets Mrs T'* does beautifully.)

Dr G meets Mrs T

Today he puts his research on hold
and goes to talk to the patient.
He kneels beside her, asks how she is feeling.
She replies she is anxious and has many questions
which is why I am here, he says, to answer them.
He takes her hands in his and looks into her eyes,
a strong steady gaze.

She's scheduled for surgery to remove a cancerous tumour
and tomorrow he's back in the lab,
mapping coloured charts from shards of tissue
beaming searchlights on fine distinctions
between one thing and another.

She is the reason and this is the issue:
to give people like her, like me, like us
easier and speedier diagnoses,
better prognoses.

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Have A Nice Day!

We needed to give notice to view
In order to *'make her ready'*
(In other words defrost)
I wondered if a large microwave
might just speed things up.
Afterwards: *"Was everything all right for you?"*
trilled the young girl on the desk.
Obviously still at Foundation level
on her Bereavement N.V.Q.
"Very nice, thank you." I replied.

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ANTI-DEPRESSANTS

Your GP faced a screen
Took notes
Upped the dose
Sent you home

The centre took you in
Took notes
Contact GP
Sent you home

You took a rucksack
Left your home
Found a good place
Wrote a note

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Care Assistant

The assault on her
was unashamed, brutal.
A nurse, so called, smelling
slightly of body odour, bedpans
leant over and kissed her wetly and full
on the lips, called her 'darling', 'sweetheart'
thus raping what remained of her dignity.

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Cheese and potato gun

I find myself doing this now:
thinking in terms
of them
and us.

I was feeling sorry
for the scrawny lass
that sees me.

My **PCC**.

Personal Crisis Counsellor.

She always seems
to be having to work
through her dinnerbreaks
because of people running over.

So I bought a couple
of cheez 'n' tayto pasties.
from that place in the market
with the eccentric spelling.

I reckoned my **PCC** was a vegetarian
– she looks like one.

A bit peaky.

So, today I presented her
with my offering.

And she looked at me
like I'd just pulled a gun.

"Oh no.

*I couldn't possibly accept a gift
– from a client".*

So, hers had to sit
by the box of tissues,
steaming.

I had it for my tea that night
with some sprouts.

But I realised the lines
had been made clear

– drawn up.

Them
and us.

Distillers of Death

T – oo little, too late.

H – arry Evans at least tried.

A – pologies are slippery creatures.

L – ove remains their main compensation.

I – it is cheaper to kill than maim, remains the legal adage.

D – eformity in black and white 60s footage offers shadowy reproach.

O – f all those countless 'distilled' victims,

M – ost died within a year of birth,

I – ncluding her. Dearest and

D – ead, so loved and lost

E – ternally, my sister.

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Gastro Gal

She's mah rootin' tootin' Gastro gal!
Riding high, and right as a trivet. But firing blanks.
She studies mah stools like prairie prints
Tracking mah irregular movements
'Cross the wilderness of Crohn's county.
Here, where the vultures of inflammation
Have picked the flesh off mah
Calcium-depleted bones
She snaps open the worn map
Of mah disease
And looks – lost.
Ya see, Crohn's is a desolate god-forsaken place.
A high, wide, cruel county,
With twisting trails
That tighten and trip
The weary traveller
Taking 'em to places
They don't ever wanna be.
And it's lonely as hell out here
'Cos there ain't another soul treading
In your steps.
Only that darned twinkling mirage of remission
Urging y'all on.
But mah greenhorn Gastro gal
Is soon back in the saddle.
Yee ha! Following her gut instincts
To prescribe me another dose of quack medicine.
Later, when I'm found, high and dry,
Faint from lack of blood pressure,
She pales herself. Unsteady.
Ya see, mah Gastro Gal wears the right hat
Walks the walk and talks the talk
But she's riding too many fences on her own.
I know she's looking out for me
But when you're in trouble
You wanna see a Sheriff.
And I ain't no chucklehead.
I know she's just keeping me corralled
Away from that consultant
Who I ain't seen now for nigh on three years.
But mah rootin' tootin' Gastro Gal
Will round me up in another six weeks or so
To tell me what the big boss man said
When they talked about me – without me.
And the dust balls keep on rolling.....

The Little Word 'Pop'

“Just pop your things off and pop up on the couch,”
he said. “I ought to examine you.
I’ll just pop out and ask the nurse
to join us.” *That’ll be fun*, I thought,
and so I dutifully popped.

“Pop your bag on the chair, dear,
and lie down. Try to relax,” he said.
Patronising git.

Curtains.
Enter the nurse, Stage Left.

So I lay with my tender breast between his hands
(it just popped out)
and the nurse looking on
and the bleeper buzzing
and the monitor winking
and they said
“We’ll need you to pop up to the hospital
to get this checked.”

So I popped up there, dutifully, as before.
And guess what? It’s somewhat serious.
So next time they say ‘pop’
I’m off, popping my clogs,
running for my life.

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SONIC THE HEDGEHOG KILLED YOUR BABY

A sonnet.

What we create, is ours to give a name:
What we discover, we feel we have created.
Thus the designers of computer games:
Thus two geneticists. They anticipated
Renown, respect of peers, a Nobel prize;
While playing wanton gods with lab fruit flies,
They identified a gene, which when awry,
Raised spiny bumps upon an embryo fly.
Gung ho with pride, their alpha-minds decided
To name 'their' gene for the hedgehog from Japan.
But not so cute, that same flaw coincided
In human babies, resulting in a scan
Revealing Cyclops eye, a malformed brain,
Disability, early death. To fathers and mothers
It jars to hear the culprit's frivolous name;
A prize for some, heartbreak and havoc for others.

Not meant of course, but it could have been expected:
Genetics tells us, all life is connected.

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