[Apologies](#)

Alex Okun

You were right.
That IV was no good.
Looking at his arm all swollen like that,
I thought, "That says it all."

I'm sorry we kept bothering you.
"Please don't wake him for vitals,"
You told us.

Sometimes we don't see the signs.

I was hoping she would stay home longer,
That you would have had more time together.
She liked starting school every September.
She loved that backpack.

I'm sorry it always took so long
To get into the room.
I'm sorry I took so long to call you back.
I liked our long talks.

If I say "we,"
Then maybe I'm not to blame.
We don't know why some children
Develop this complication.

We don't know why
The brain is so fragile,
Yet so enduring.
That's not very nice.

We don't know why
It happened.
I know you had some ideas.
So did they.

Remember the time
We didn't start the dopamine?
She pulled through that fine,
Amused at our discussions.

Or the time
We got the antibiotics started so fast,
And his blood culture grew out
Only a few hours later?

Those storms down South were nothing
Like what hits you every day.
The levees keep on breaking.
Who can ride these waves of grief?

We remember her.
We will never forget him,
Or you,
Or when we were together.

I just want you to remember
That we still care.

About the poet:

Alex Okun MD is associate professor of clinical pediatrics at Albert Einstein
College of Medicine and Montefiore Medical Center, and codirector of
Pediatric Palliative Care at the Children's Hospital of Montefiore. "I care
for kids who are healthy as well as those with special health-care needs,
teach residents and students and lead a home visit program for residents. I
maintain my own wellness through family closeness and fitness activities."

About the poem:

"I wrote and read this poem for our hospital's annual memorial service,
'Always in Our Hearts.' The poem was inspired by the children I've cared for
as they were dying, and by their families."

Poetry editors:

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