

# Chemo Patient

Category: Poems

written by Geoffrey Bowe | September 4, 2009

She tried

To imagine herself dead  
As she lay on her bed  
Staring at the ceiling  
With chemotherapy  
Seeping into her veins  
But she couldn't  
She could only think  
Of her husband  
And her children  
And how they had laughed  
When her hair had fallen out.

In order to die  
Everything had to stop  
Her heart  
Her brain  
The blood surging  
Through her arteries  
But she could not imagine it.  
Everything  
Seemed to be running so well.

She was not frightened of dying  
But she had always  
Looked forward to the future  
And now it seemed  
There may not be one.  
It was not like her  
To look backwards  
So she carried on  
Staring at the ceiling  
And tried holding her breath.

## **About the poet:**

Geoffrey Bowe has been writing poetry since he was sixteen and has written nursing poetry since he trained as a nurse, nearly thirty years ago. His work has appeared in two anthologies of writing by nurses ([Between the Heartbeats](#) and [Intensive Care](#), both U of Iowa Press) and also in [Nursing Standard](#) and [The International Journal of Healthcare & Humanities](#). He has now changed from general nursing to mental-health nursing and works in a medium-security forensic unit in Kent, England.

## **About the poem:**

"While nursing a young woman on chemotherapy, I observed her deep in thought—but rather than ask her, I tried to imagine what she might be thinking. Suddenly on the cusp between life and death, but still very much alive, could she possibly be imagining death itself and thinking how much has really got to happen before anyone dies? Her heartbeat, so strong—as it should be in a young woman—would have to stop, as well as all that goes on in her brain. Surely this, I thought, would seem unlikely and distant to her, even in this situation."

**Poetry editors:**

Judy Schaefer and Johanna Shapiro