

Community Medicine

Category: Poems

written by Kendra Fleagle Gorlitsky | January 9, 2015

Kendra Fleagle Gorlitsky

Are you going to take that long with all the patients?

Depends. If they're really sick, I'll have to.

I'm just saying...there are a lot waiting.

Well, this one tried to kill herself last year. And today she's really hurting.

I wanted a full physical, and I heard this is just a check-up, but I've been waiting over two hours!

Could you put this gown on, please. What are you worried about?

I can't find work that doesn't make me lift, but I can't lift.

Can you swim?

Never learned.

What was your favorite job?

Don't tell on my mom, it's not her fault.

You deserve more. What are you good at?

I like math...and I can draw.

I have to make that phone call. Bring by your report card, we'll talk colleges. You were in foster care for a while, so you might be able to get a scholarship.

Doctor, are you taking lunch? You still have three morning patients.

Mr. Gomez, why aren't you taking the insulin?

Doc, I never liked needles. And that kept me out of trouble.

This is different. You may have to trust me on this. I want you to stay healthy.

Can you see her younger brother? You're overbooked, but he looks sicker.

Did I just have a seizure, or did the computer freeze?

Well? Am I?

Do you want to be?

I don't mind. Whatever...

Would your boyfriend be a good father? Does he have a job? Where will you live?

Computers are down. We have to switch to paper.

Why wasn't that consult arranged? It's been months...

Can you see one for Dr. Bates? She had to leave for a meeting, and this patient took two buses.

Is there any coffee left?

This one's late, but it's a hospital follow-up, and he has a fever.

Can we still get a blood draw?

We're leaving, doc. Go out the side door. Security has to go soon.

'Night. Thanks for your help.

About the poet:

Kendra Fleagle Gorlitsky, a family doctor and clinical professor of medicine at the University of Southern California, provides care to immigrant and other underserved populations in Los Angeles community clinics. She makes service trips abroad to Nicaragua, Honduras, Mexico, Belize, Haiti and, most recently, Myanmar: "These remind me that we do have a safety net, albeit inadequate, in this country." She edits a bioethics newsletter, scoutmasters an inner-city Boy Scout troop, plays softball, participates in a community garden and writes original rockabilly/blues music "to refuel the tank."

About the poem:

"The challenges I experience as a community-clinic family doc are likely familiar to other harried physicians trying to stay true to their love of this field. When not working in this setting, I teach courses in clinical skills and professionalism to medical students at USC and UCLA. I want them to be prepared for the pressures of this work, and also to know that there are few occupations offering more true delight."

Poetry editors:

Johanna Shapiro and Judy Schaefer