

# Series: Patient Interviews

Category: Poems

written by Alexandra Rosenberg | January 1, 2016

## **Alexandra Rosenberg**

### *1. (PHQ-9: Screen for Depression)*

“Depressed? Course I’m depressed.  
My wife died ten years ago.  
My son? Well...  
He does the best he can for me.”

### *2. (DNR)*

“What’s that you call it?  
In-tube-ate?  
No ma’am.  
No way to die.  
Just call my daughter,  
give me some pills—  
I’ll go easy.”

### *3. (Suicide Attempt)*

“I’ve got two voices in my head  
Chuck and Butch  
Chuck’s not so bad, but Butch...  
I like Chuck, I don’t want him to go away.  
But things got bad,  
My girlfriend left me.  
My head was  
a too-loud radio station  
—can’t turn it off.  
I took a bunch of pills  
Bought a gun. I was going to do it.  
But my mom got home early that day.  
She took me here.

It’s been great here.  
I saw, maybe, twelve doctors today.  
Everyone’s so nice to me here.  
They explain everything.”

### *4. (OB/GYN Well-Woman Visit at a Free Clinic)*

“How’m I doing today?  
I’m having a fit, that’s what!  
That nurse put me on the scale  
First time in who knows how long,

–179 pounds!  
I haven't been that big  
Since my last baby!

Other than that?  
Guess I'm doing OK.  
Just lazy--that's my real problem.  
Just lazy."

5. (*An Old Doctor Lectures Medical Students About Work-Life Balance*)

"We thought we were so tough, back then.  
We were strong men,  
But in ten years, we turned to alcohol,  
Saw our marriages broken  
Our lives in pieces.  
My wife and children were the most important things  
–I knew that–  
But I gave my best time and energy to Duke."

**About the poet:**

Alexandra Rosenberg is a fourth-year medical student at Duke University School of Medicine. Originally from New York, she is currently enjoying the balmy Durham winter with her husband, Trey, her dog, Lady Bird, and her cat, Kitty.

**About the poem:**

"This poem is based on conversations I've had in a variety of clinical settings in medical school. I am grateful to be going into medicine, in part because of the myriad opportunities to engage with a diverse group of people during both trivial and profound moments in their lives."

**Poetry editors:**

Johanna Shapiro and Judy Schaefer