

February More Voices: Longing

Category: Longing

written by Paul Gross | February 1, 2026

Dear readers,

I think it was a Unitarian minister who introduced me to the idea that anger is generally a response to a wound. That truth is viscerally apparent to me every time I straighten up and bonk my head on a corner kitchen cabinet. *Ouch!* My fury at the cabinet is something to behold.

It's often easier to express rage than it is to express its underlying vulnerability—like hurt or yearning.

When I look at Sara Kohrt's photograph for this month's *More Voices* theme, I think of longing—the longing that must have been felt by immigrants arriving by boat who saw the Statue of Liberty through the mist. I can imagine their longing for safety from persecution, longing for an end to starvation and longing for a safe place to call home, to make a living and to raise a family.

The patients I cared for had their own longings: They longed for an end to pain; longed for reassurance that their symptom was not a cancer; longed for continued good health—or for a return to better health; longed to take fewer pills; longed not to get diabetes—or, if they already had it, to improve their blood sugars; longed to feel less depressed; longed for a shorter wait to see their doctor; longed for their children to climb a ladder out of poverty; longed for reliable transportation to appointments; and longed for an apartment without mold or leaks—in a safer neighborhood.

As their physician, I had my own longings: I longed to do a better job providing relief to my patients with chronic pain; longed for an electronic medical record that didn't drive me crazy; longed for fewer patients on my schedule; longed for fewer forms to fill out; longed to finish my notes right after my last patient left—instead of at home, at midnight; longed for insurance companies to simply disappear or, at minimum, to stop throwing roadblocks in the way of medications or tests my patients needed; and longed for a hospital administration that would show appreciation for me and my primary care colleagues—instead of shuffling us about like widgets.

And when it was my turn to be a patient, I had my own longings: I longed for a doctor who listened to me; longed to avoid the long-term consequences of my own diabetes; longed for the prostate biopsy not to be too painful—and not to result in sepsis, which had killed someone I knew; longed for the surgery to successfully remove the cancer; and longed to get on with my life and to leave this unpleasantness in the rearview mirror.

I longed not to die before my time.

Frustrated longings take a toll. For my patients, these frustrations could

lead to anger, to hopelessness and despair, and to difficulties in keeping up with medications and appointments. As a physician, frustrated longings led to moments of fury against the insurance companies and employer who made me feel so powerless. As a patient, I've been lucky—not lucky to have come down with type 1 diabetes or prostate cancer, but lucky to have been treated well by doctors and nurses, and to be one of the fortunate ones whose medical expenses were actually covered by Medicare and insurance. And I'm still here.

Sara Kohrt's photo also reminds me that, as a nation, we also seem to be longing—longing for compassion toward the stranger who arrives at our doorstep; longing for justice, tolerance and fairness; and longing for a recognition of our common humanity.

This month's *More Voices* theme is [Longing](#). What have you been longing for—as a patient, caregiver or healthcare provider? How has that longing been answered—or thwarted?

Share your story using the [More Voices Submission Form](#). For more details, visit [More Voices FAQs](#). And have a look at last month's theme: [Nursing](#).

Remember, your story should be 40-400 words and healthcare-related. And no poetry, please.

We look forward to hearing from you. And thanks for being a part of the *Pulse* community.

Warmly,

Paul Gross
Editor