

An Editor's Invitation: Behind Closed Doors

Category: Behind Closed Doors

written by Paul Gross | April 1, 2021

Dear *Pulse* readers,

To me, there is something sacred about closing the door to an exam room. In my time as a physician, the exam rooms I've worked in have never been luxurious. But even under shabby or cramped conditions, there is always something powerful and symbolic about closing the exam room door.

Now you have my full attention, the gesture says. Tell me things that need to be said in private.

Of course, what actually happens in the room does not always fulfill that promise. Sometimes the patient is an avoidant teenager. Sometimes it's a cross individual who says, "Do you know I've been waiting for *an hour-and-a-half?*"

But often enough something precious does happen. Sometimes it's tears. Of late, with the the horror and isolation of COVID beginning to recede, it's something else: a shared look of warmth and joy. *It's you! We're still alive—and here we are!*

Closing a door from the inside means one thing. But when you're standing on the outside, a closing door can suggest something else entirely.

In this past year of COVID, family members and partners have been told "You can't come in here" as they watched their breathless loved ones being hustled through emergency-room doors. For how many did those closing doors frame their last glimpse of someone too precious to lose?

When I think of closed doors, I can't help but also picture those rooms where calculations and decisions are made that hurt the rest of us. I think of conversations that lead to insulin costing several hundred dollars a bottle. I think of an insurance plan that one day decides not to cover a generic medication that my patient has taken for years.

I think of meetings that take place between legislators and lobbyists for the pharmaceutical and insurance industries.

I think of political strategy sessions that lead to promoting COVID denial and the premature lifting of mask mandates.

What about you? What in your life has taken place behind closed doors? What conversations and events have you taken part in, and which have you been excluded from?

April's More Voices theme is [Behind Closed Doors](#). Send us your lived experience. And while you're at it, take a look at last month's theme, [Silver Linings](#).

For more details, visit [More Voices FAQs](#)—or go directly to the [More Voices Submission Form](#). Remember, your healthcare-related story should be 40-400 words. And no poetry, please.

Stay safe, take good care and stay tuned for our Friday story later today.

With my best regards,

Paul Gross

Editor