

# Healing Repeats Itself

Category: Healing

written by Julie A. Dickson | October 16, 2021

I arrive at sunrise to find the asphalt stretching out, dotted with steel beasts. There are no open spaces here. This the parking lot of the ER, where some of our staff are finishing their shifts, and others are about to begin.

There is no difference between day and night here. The staff works round the clock to stem the never-ending barrage of suffering and pain that comes through our doors.

Some wounds are self-inflicted, others accidental. Some patients heed our staff's advice, but many don't. *Stop smoking. Decrease drinking. Get vaccinated. Eat healthier.* Sometimes health care seems like soup dished out at a homeless shelter, where nothing seems to change.

We send our patients back to reality: bound, bandaged or medicated. But often we only treat them symptomatically: cause of illness undetermined, and no changes in lifestyle. They leave our ER with leaflets in hand that do little more than flutter in the wind.

I staff the reception desk in the ER lobby. I see them come and go. And come again.

One patient has been here at least six times. His problems stem from a deeper problem, alcoholism, that we are not equipped to address.

Another, a woman I've also seen before, appears to have bruises on her face and arms. Most likely, she'll tell our staff she fell, but I don't think so. Most likely, we'll sent her home, where she will get more bruises, and perhaps worse.

When I look out upon the full waiting room, I see mothers holding feverish infants and children, dark circles under their eyes due to sleepless nights. I wish I could hold those crying infants and give their mothers a good night's sleep.

I see a chef with a blood-soaked towel wrapped around his hand. I wish he didn't have to work so fast with such a sharp knife.

Many wait for hours with less-acute ailments: sore throats, stomach problems, allergies. I want to counsel them to see their primary care physician, or utilize a walk-in clinic.

Even though I leave each shift exhausted, I would never stop assisting the injured and the ill. Helping people provides such a feeling of worth; not to be traded or taken lightly.

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