

Help(less)

Anameeka (Annu) Singh
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It's her first appointment with this new clinic.
She's hiding her nerves behind a timid smile.
We sit in a circle and give her the room.
She reopens the wounds of her trauma, childhood, medication trials,
misdiagnoses, poor healthcare, unhealthy cycles ...
"I feel like some simple love and therapy earlier on in life
could have done more for me than all the meds they threw at me."
Tears escape the corners of her eyes.
"I don't know if I'm making any sense."
You are. You really are.
~A cry for help

"I don't want to suffocate to death."
We all grimace behind our masks.

Silently commiserating over the vicious nature of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis.
"There will come a time when the lungs won't respond to the steroids."
Having these conversations is an art. Sometimes difficult. Often necessary.
"It would be valuable to consult our palliative care docs. They're our supportive care team."
~A plea for less suffering

"His anger has just gotten so bad. It's not his fault, but ..."
Her lips tremble, trying to rein in the aching sob.
"He pulled more of my hair recently and he's hitting me more."
Her head finds the refuge of her hands as the gate bursts open.
"I'm just constantly on edge and my husband tries to help me out, but ..."
Red-rimmed eyes claw to grasp onto any strands of hope.
"We can't catch a break. We really need one."
How difficult must it be to say those words out loud, gazing at her mentally ill son. "Would you like a hug?"
A wordless nod. Eager arms outstretched.
~Helpless

It's a hustling and bustling place for care.
The rooms are numbered and the time with providers, even more so.
Welcome to the venue with a minimum wait time of one hour!
Everyone is tasked to help – to answer the call, decipher the puzzle, and tackle the suffering.

You answer the same questions three times as often
as you get to tell the full story that only you know best.
Did you ever guess that an EHR could compete with you for that ability?
After all, its knowledge of previous healthcare encounters is superior,
offering likely repeat offenders within seconds.

The time spent poring through pixels of secondary sources will be more than
any amount of time spent parsing decibels of primary source.
"I know I've had chest pain before, but this feels different. It feels like—"
"I'll look back at your chart. We'll check some labs, get you some meds, and go from there, okay?"
~If only they would "help" less and listen more

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Anameeka (Annu) Singh is a fourth-year medical student at the UNC School of Medicine. She received her B.S. in Neuroscience from the University of Pittsburgh. Prior to medical school, she cultivated her love for writing and the arts informally. She has previously published in *Iris* and served in editor roles with *Iris* and *The Health Humanities Journal* of UNC-Chapel Hill.

Ask her about the collection of wordplay poems she is creating for her Humanities and Social Sciences Scholarly Concentration!

See more of Anameeka's work on pages 15 and 45.

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