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## Editorial

*In-Tension*

Medicine is often imagined as a process: as a series of actions performed on the body and mind, or as a journey from diagnosis to treatment (and hopefully to cure). It might be more accurate, however, to imagine medicine as a relationship: as the connection between a doctor and his or her patient, between a patient and his or her own body, between an ailing individual and the family and friends who provide care.

All of the pieces that appear in this issue of *Ars Medica* explore this idea of medicine-as-relationship. Some address the ways in which a person relates to his or her own body, as in Brenna Fitzgerald's "Under the Skin," which describes a ballet dancer's relationship with her fragile bones. Others examine how the experience of illness can bring interpersonal relationships into stark focus: Jessie Carson's "Velvet. Face. Red. Church." imagines a grown-up daughter's response to her father's unexplained memory loss, while N. West Moss's "Dad Died" maps a father's declining health onto the happier reminiscences of his grown child.

The personal and the physical are often intertwined. Relationships with one's own body and mind can often reflect or augment the relationships one has with the bodies and minds of others. For example, Ariel Lefkowitz's "Fresh New-Age Stuff" depicts the lifelong friendship of two elderly men, which is mirrored in their different relation-

ships with—and attitudes toward—their ailing bodies. Dwight E. Watson’s “Great Faith in a Seed” contrasts a variety of complex processes, among them the treatment of an aggressive cancer, the management of an invasive pond species, the building of a log cabin, and the writing of a play. This issue’s feature piece—Upendra Maddineni’s “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Health”—juxtaposes the challenges of a resident’s first night on call with the rallying call to self-confidence that is William Ernest Henley’s poem, “Invictus.”

The poetry that appears in this issue also grapples with relationships, some complex and others surprising. Kristin Agudelo’s “Boy, Seized” and Patricia Cardoso Pastura’s “Status Epilepticus” both imagine the experiences of unwell children from the perspective of their parents. Alan Steinberg’s “Terminal” also takes up the idea of the relationship between the healthy and the sick, although in his piece the connection between the one who is afflicted and the one who provides care is ambiguous. Lawrence Joseph Hergott’s “A Tender, Comforting Something” draws an unexpected parallel between tending to the birds that visit his garden and the dying refugee children he sees pictured in the newspaper. One of Richard Waring’s two poems—“Studio for Portrait Masks, Paris, 1917”—describes the surprisingly tender relationship that individuals sometimes have with their prostheses, while his other—“The Stabbing”—documents a father’s response to his son’s tumultuous personal life.

This issue features the winners of the *Ars Medica*-CMAJ Humanities Poetry and Prose Writing Competition, through which the threads of relationships also happen to run. Lisa Y. Liang's "C4 C5" wonders about the relationship that paralyzed people have with their own bodies. Anna Lee Grant's "I Love You" documents the intertwined lives of two medical practitioners, who also happen to be husband and wife, father and mother, cancer patient and carer. Meanwhile, Jason McDevitt's "Blasé" gives a strikingly honest account of a doctor's internal monologue while talking to a patient.

Implicit in all of the pieces that appear in this issue is yet another relationship: the unspoken relationship between writer and reader. The medical humanities fosters dialogue between doctors and patients, between patients and carers, and—as the pieces in this issue show—it can even offer writers a way to speak directly to (and not just about) their own bodies. In publishing these pieces, *Ars Medica* extends the dialogue. It opens the conversation to all of those who read the medical humanities: readers who may some day engage in their own dialogues with doctors, patients, family, friends—and, undoubtedly, with their own bodies.

Sarah Roger