

## Editorial

# Anniversary Issue

As this is our fifth anniversary issue, it seems appropriate that we pause to review what we've accomplished in our first half decade. We began with the hope of being a forum for "the unique stories of those who are ill or recovering" as well those who are members of the healing professions or historians of the medical arts. Intending to give this subject the widest possible venue for expression, we invited contributors to send fiction, non-fiction, poetry, prose, memoir, history, image, and narratives of personal experiences of illness. Since the beginning we have regularly received all these types of submissions, and this issue includes examples of each.

Physicians and other health professionals have contributed to every issue of *Ars Medica*. In this issue, we include four physicians' narratives: "Hector and Edward," "A Diplomatic Doctor," "A Tale of a T-shirt," and "On Call." Each of these is told from the perspective of physicians facing complex clinical challenges. What makes them memorable is not only the suspense of the clinical dilemmas, but the powerful, palpable sense that these authors all feel that they should have done more, no matter how much they have achieved.

In the last five years we have presented pieces concerning over fifty different physical conditions, including such obscure ones as Cruzon's syndrome and Osgood Slaughter disease. Writers recounting their own experience of illness emphasize the felt experience of being not only unwell, but also, of being a patient, the passivity of being acted upon by others and the indignity of forsaking autonomy in order to regain it when the medical problem is solved. The experience is one of impotence, not only in the sense of erectile dysfunction, so vividly capture in George Stevenson's poem in this issue, but in an existential sense.

A large number of our contributors write about the precarious experience of being a caregiver, supporter, witness, partner, or survivor of someone who is ill. To write honestly of the double bind of caring deeply

for a person in need, but resenting the burden their dependency causes demands a courage that *Ars Medica* is privileged to honour. In this issue, the mother of a diabetic son gives us the detailed truth about what his condition has done to everyone in the family circle with such honesty that we understand why it could only be published anonymously. Perhaps *Ars Medica's* most significant role is to provide a place for parents struggling against the odds and even losing the struggle to memorialize their valiant attempt to protect their children from forces beyond any human being's control

Medical historians have also been regular contributors to *Ars Medica*. Their work reminds us of how longstanding a pursuit the medical arts have been, and how subject to the variables of time, place, knowledge, and personality. In our first issue, we featured the tuberculosis sanatorium era, which ended with the development of streptomycin. And in this issue we offer a visual statement on the final days of a refuge for people with Hansen's disease, otherwise known as leprosy. We also have a different kind of medical history in this issue, a report on medical history in the making, by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, about the relatively recent identification of child abuse and the need to intervene to prevent it. On a different note, an imaginative cardiologist, Ernest Fallen, presents a charming portrait of William Withering, as seen from a variety of interesting angles.

The birth and growth of a literary journal seems remarkably similar to the birth and growth of a human being. Getting launched requires much more than the necessities of life, but stimulation, emotional connection, response from the world around us, and financial security. We feel lucky to have received the necessary supplies to thrive from our readers and contributors, our medical and literary community and most notably the Department of Psychiatry, Mount Sinai Hospital, University of Toronto, the Munk Centre for International Studies at University of Toronto, the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto, and the Canada Council for the Arts. With this foundation we feel poised for another growth spurt in the second half of this decade.

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