

# MIND TO MIND

*Creative writing that explores the abstract side  
of our profession and our lives*

*Carol Wiley Cassella, M.D., Editor*

## Perioperative Six-word Stories

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Six-word stories purportedly originated when Ernest Hemingway wrote “For sale: Baby shoes, never worn” on a napkin. Regardless of origin, the idea of creating a narrative drama with just six words is a popular writing exercise. This group project was done in a series of workshops for residents and faculty that seek to foster professionalism in medicine through creative writing. Each of the following twenty stories was meant to stand alone, but we also hope there is continuity within them for readers in the perioperative world.

Called patient’s wife, “Mother.” Great introduction.  
Water allergy; can’t wait to hear.  
Chewing tobacco is a clear, right?  
My #5 pain is others’ #10.  
Propofol—thanks a lot, Michael Jackson.  
Lips will heal, teeth will not.  
BMI 60: spinal or awake fiberoptic?  
Orange, blue, white juice, blade, tube.  
That tooth was like that, right?  
Train-tracking is not my forte.  
Vitals? Check. Fluids? Check. iPhone? Check.  
He was stable until the incision.  
Chest compressions are not a rhythm.  
Propofol gives us both some peace.  
Splashes of soul stained my shoes.  
Needle stick. We become blood brothers.

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Accepted for publication October 18, 2014.

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Pager fell in commode. Quiet bliss.  
The thready pulse disappeared after fentanyl.  
Bad smell—me or the patient?  
20th grader. Final graduation. Doctoring begins.