

MIND TO MIND

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

Carol Wiley Cassella, M.D., Editor

Doctor Patient

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I *I* was a physician, double boarded, groomed at some of the top schools in the country,

teacher of the year as an anesthesiology attending,

mother to two perfect children,

podium triathlete, runner and skier.

Shattered by breast cancer diagnosed at the young age of 43,

with no genetic predisposition, no family history, no deleterious habits or toxic diet to blame.

And humbled by my now singularly focused anesthetic medical knowledge,

which would be broadened to include all things cancer

for my own self-preservation.

But I was not angry, rather empowered, to research my illness,

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and proactively reclaim every 1% reduction in breast cancer recurrence risk in my favor.

Each 1% is immeasurably grand when you look into the eyes of your children, ages 9 and 11,

and want to be able to say “Mommy did everything she could so I could stay with you here....”

15-year survival rates seem a cruel joke when you are 43 years old

and live your life as if you will live until the age of 90.

Now I have crafted my medical course to include the best surgeons, oncologist, healthy diet and exercise habits, and of course, anesthesia.

Why yes, Dr. Surgeon, my anesthetic management is key

and has been shown to be in many an article—

So I get blocked, avoid all narcotics, which would slow my cellular defenses,

and wake up from my propofol slumber ravenous and quite lucid within a few short hours.

No nausea, no drug induced haze, and almost pain free,

while I weave in anti-inflammatories.

I am a success story which should be written far more frequently in surgical journals and annals.

I am a servant of God,

mother of the year to two perfect children,

tenacious fighter against my cancer,

and a *stronger* advocate for my patients

who, as we all would, seek every small but still meaningful opportunity

to improve the odds of winning the fight against cancer.