

MIND TO MIND

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

Stephen T. Harvey, M.D., Editor

The Burnout Dance of the Forever Pandemic

Vidya T. Raman, M.D., M.B.A., Vanessa A. Olbrecht, M.D., M.B.A.,
Allison M. Fernandez, M.D., M.B.A.

D Day in, day out, the mask goes over my face, nose, and mouth
Not since I was a teen have I had to use acne wash
Pain everywhere, especially behind my ears and the bridge of my nose
My roots are gray and the ends are scraggly
Who will see, who will care?
Time is precious in a way never before but meaningless
The list is never ending of the things to get done
One item comes off and another immediately added on
From the badge swipe into the operating room till the badge swipe out in the parking
garage,
I count and measure the time with each minute
But the day is a blur
I cannot tell you if it was a good day or a bad day
Just a day, another day
A lonely life surrounded by many but alone with my swirling thoughts and worries
One hundred texts from home—we are out of milk, we need bread, when are you coming

Accepted for publication February 3, 2022. Published online first on March 1, 2022.

Vidya T. Raman, M.D., M.B.A.: Department of Anesthesiology and Pain Medicine, The Ohio State University College of Medicine, Columbus, Ohio. vtraman@me.com

Vanessa A. Olbrecht, M.D., M.B.A.: Department of Anesthesiology and Pain Medicine, Nationwide Children's Hospital, Columbus, Ohio.

Allison M. Fernandez, M.D., M.B.A.: Department of Anesthesiology and Pain Medicine, Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, St. Petersburg, Florida.

Permission to reprint granted to the American Society of Anesthesiologists by copyright author/owner. *Anesthesiology* 2022; 136:1040–1. DOI: 10.1097/ALN.0000000000004169

Thank goodness for delivery service, one flick of my finger on my phone and done
I wish everything was that easy
There is the faculty Zoom meeting—I plan to multi-task while watching soccer practice
Will they remember if I was present at either place?
Do what you can when you can
When does this happen?
Survey after survey
Are you well?
No and no, and not at all
But what is the solution besides being quiet
Who has time to contest when each day is a battle
To be fought not to be lost but never won
Of work, home, wash, rinse, repeat
When was science so reviled?
When did fact become lie and the hero now the villain?
A bad doctor, mother, wife, daughter, sister
Not one role a success
I was forced to attend this macabre dance
Had no choice or will
Which seems to go on and on
Please give me the strength to survive one more dance
Of the forever pandemic