

MIND TO MIND

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

James M. Berry, M.D., Editor

A Patient's Countdown to Surgery

Julia Baskin McKillen, M.D., David Joseph McKillen, M.I.S., Kevin Cummisford, M.D., with collaboration from LDS Hospital Anesthesia Department

Count backwards from 100, and I will begin to give you the anesthesia

100 mcg fentanyl
99 days of symptoms
98 % Sp_o₂
97 minutes spent researching “whipple”
96 platelet count
95 diastolic pressure after laryngoscopy
94 alk phosphatase
93 chloride
92 minute wait time at the first surgery appointment
91 days since last cigarette
90 mm oral airway
89 times cursing God, asking: “why me? why now?”
88 times praying to God asking His help to pull through
87 blood glucose
86 number of different scrub hats I've seen today
85 kg
84 MAP
83 tears shed by my love when my fate was shared
82 SBP after propofol induction
81 mg aspirin
80 mg succinylcholine
79 minutes spent in pre-op getting ready for surgery
78 people in my graduating class
77 age my mother died
76 mph to make it to hospital on time
75 mg Lyrica
74 seconds of “taking big breaths” with mask over my face
73 steps from check-in to the pre-op room
72 BPM
71 people in my graduating class still alive
70 cc's suctioned from NG
69 inches
68 GFR
67 years old
66 PaO₂
65 minutes spent with Father John when I got the news

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Julia Baskin McKillen, M.D.: LDS Hospital, Salt Lake City, Utah. juliemckillen@gmail.com

David Joseph McKillen, M.I.S.: Basebuild, Inc., Salt Lake City, Utah.

Kevin Cummisford, M.D.: LDS Hospital, Salt Lake City, Utah.

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64 degrees in the OR
 63 seconds getting IV in in pre-op
 62 seconds getting 2nd IV in OR, this one a 14 gauge
 61 age of my father's death
 60 cc's of local for TAP block
 59 minute phone call with my sister yesterday
 58 AST
 57 % ejection fraction
 56 minutes spent with my love getting our finances in order
 55 cc's urine output during second hour of surgery
 54 pack years
 53 age when my first daughter got married
 52 times asked, "why do you look so yellow?"
 51 whipples performed by surgeon in last year
 50 mg rocuronium
 49 minute car ride to hospital
 48 days since my last drink
 47 minutes spent in long embrace with my love when we took in my fate
 46 age when twin towers fell
 45 questions answered at the last visit with the surgeon
 44 ceiling tiles from pre-op to the OR
 43 degree bair hugger setting
 42 ALT
 41 years of marriage
 40 mg lidocaine
 39 hematocrit
 38 PTT
 37 degrees esophageal temp probe
 36 years of oldest child
 35 years spent in career
 34 ETco₂
 33 text messages wishing me well
 32 days mentally preparing for surgery
 31 hairs standing on the back of my neck
 30 cc's aspirated for day of surgery labs
 29 PT
 28 intact teeth
 27 BMI
 26 years' experience for surgeon
 25 mg HCTZ
 24 stoplights on the way here
 23 lb weight loss
 22 cm at the lips
 21 age I fell in love
 20 gauge IV
 19 years in the same home
 18 Fr foley
 17 "get better soon" cards sitting on the mantle
 16 breaths per minute
 15 cc's of propofol
 14 grandchildren, and one on the way
 13 hemoglobin
 12 lead EKG
 11 hours NPO
 10 mcg ephedrine
 9 hours expected surgical time
 8 bilirubin
 7 internal diameter endotracheal tube
 6 cm thyromental distance
 5 children waiting for a phone call
 4 mg decadron
 3 macintosh blade
 2 eyes taped shut
 1 endotracheal tube in
 0 fear