

An Internist Listens on Pediatric Rounds

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“Just listen
with a willingness
to be changed,”
said Ray,
the tieless,
tireless tumor terminator
now turned
pediatric palliator.

I listen,
I hear faults form as
foundations crack
from the forceful oscillator that
keeps little Jack’s airways open
and his mother’s
good ship Hope afloat.

I listen,
I hear a Mother’s lonely lullaby while
the team explains
young Brian’s swollen brain is
severely damaged
beyond survival;
meaningful survival, that is,
whatever that means.

I listen,
I hear sadness as
Little Alice
sells lemonade and
gives pedicures in the PCICU
tethered tightly to her bed.
Pressors preserve her life
while she and Mom wait
for the Wizard to grant her
a new heart.

I listen,
I hear the faint dirge of
funeral pipes.
Beautiful Mara’s eyes
spy her father
filling her room,
filling her life
as they traverse the ECMO bridge to nowhere as
hopes for her new lungs
fade unfairly.

I listen
by now my ears
seek answers
like brain-injured Shelagh’s young parents
seek answers where there may be none.
Is she better?
Is she worse?
Please give us a sign.
Please give me a sign.
Am I willing to be changed?

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