

# MIND TO MIND

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

*Stephen T. Harvey, M.D., Editor*

## **I Remember**

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I look up. I see her, racing toward me, baby in arms. Her face is beaming. The unmistakable glow of a proud new parent.

“Here he is, Dr. Sharda!” A round, sleeping baby is thrust into my clumsy arms. I steady my posture and look down into his merely days-old face. My fingers, moments earlier swiping and typing at furious speed to answer yet another email before I rush back to the OR, now slow their pace as I gently stroke his foot, his hand, his unbelievably soft hair.

“The epidural was amazing!” says his Mum breathlessly.

For the first time I look up into her blue eyes. They are bright and betray that heady mix of exhaustion and exhilaration—the hallmark of every new parent. I search that sea of blue, those flecks of brown, trying, pulling, reaching into the recesses of my memory to place this woman standing in front of me, her precious baby in my arms.

Did I put in her epidural? Do her C-section?

My brain tries to calculate the age of this baby in conjunction with the matrix of my call schedule and I admit sheepishly and silently to myself that perhaps a 4:00 AM

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interaction a week ago has slipped out of my tired mind, merging into the stream of cases I managed that night.

Her earnest stare moves from me to baby, baby to me, her smile not breaking, her giddy enthusiasm almost infectious.

“I did what you said,” she continues, “Asked for the epidural early, told the nurses the evidence you showed me about early epidurals not prolonging labor, and made sure everyone knew that it would be important for my medical condition that my epidural be placed early, and...and...It was amazing. Everyone was amazing!”

I remember. I remember instantly. The consultation. Those bright blue eyes were anxious and scared that day. Sitting together in the preop clinic, those eyes had searched my face for answers, for reassurance. Clinic had run late. I had spent time with her, explaining the analgesia options, going through diagrams and evidence, sharing both anecdote and research on labor and her particular medical condition. I had printed out a research paper and placed it carefully in her chart for my colleagues to also read. I remember. I remember it all.

I am at once amazed and incredulous. I had not so much as touched this woman's back, not so much as provided any ounce of pharmacology, any degree of “intervention,” and yet here we were, her most precious asset lying in my arms, because I had given her, and myself, perhaps the greatest gifts physicians and patients offer one another—the gift of conversation and the art of story.