

# Capillaries

Journal of Medical Humanities

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ISSUE 12: Winter 2022

Cover by Makenna Fojas

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capillariesjournal.com

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Printed in USA by 48HrBooks ([www.48HrBooks.com](http://www.48HrBooks.com))

## A Note to the Reader

The following pieces may contain themes relating to sexual assault, suicide, disordered eating, mental health, and other sensitive topics.

## Special Thanks

*Capillaries* would like to thank the following people, groups, and funders for their support and guidance:

- *Health Sciences Service Learning and Advocacy Group (since replaced by the Interprofessional Service Learning Advisory Committee)*
  - Thank you to Tracy Brazg and Rachel Lazzar for their mentorship and for providing us with a mini-grant from the Center for Health Sciences Interprofessional Education, Research, and Practice to financially support this journal. Thank you also to Leonora Clarke, Josephine Ensign, Rick Arnold, Genevieve Pagalilauan, Lynly Beard and all others who welcomed us to the table to share our ideas. We are indebted to your support and guidance.
  
- *UW Student Activities Office and Wells Fargo*
  - Thank you for the generous funding through the Wells Fargo Fund for Registered Student Organizations, which has allowed us to provide a space for students and members of our community to honor and discuss stories that may otherwise go unheard.
  
- *HUB Awards Review Committee*
  - Thank you for choosing *Capillaries* as the winner of the 2020 Husky Empowerment Award, for the 2020-2021 programming grant, and for commemorating this organization in the HUB.
  
- *UW Alumni Association*
  - Thank you for the generous support through the 2020-2021 UW Alumni Association Fund for Registered Student Organizations.
  
- Nancy Sisko, *PhD, Associate Director of Humanities Academic Services*
  - Thank you for all your words of wisdom and empowerment over the past years and for helping us to bring greater understanding between the sciences and the humanities.

- William Phillips, *MD, MPH, Professor Emeritus of Family Medicine*
  - Thank you for your mentorship and advice on the journal's editing process and vision- your experience in writing, editing, and medical humanities and your desire to help us continue to improve *Capillaries* have been invaluable.
- Jerome Graber, *MD, MPH, Associate Professor of Neurology and Neurosurgery*
  - Thank you for your encouragement, for graciously volunteering to mentor our team, and for helping *Capillaries* to expand its platform and reach.
- Adam Hoverman, *DO, MPH, DTMHI, Clinical Instructor in the Department of Health Services*
  - Thank you for your enthusiastic support and for giving us the opportunity to participate in the virtual “How Stories Can Help Heal Social Suffering” panel at Lewis & Clark College in February 2021. We are inspired by your dedication and passion for the health humanities.



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## Letter from the Editor

Dear reader,

Welcome to the 12th issue of *Capillaries Journal of Medical Humanities* at the University of Washington. *Capillaries* provides a space for individuals to creatively reflect on medical experiences. Poignant accounts of illness, death, grief, hope, and love awaken memories lying dormant within the hearts of writers, artists, and readers. Hospital rooms take shape behind closed eyes, brought to life by haunting stanzas and blinding white walls. The beeping of a heart monitor echoes somewhere in the corner of one's brain. Medicine and health take on a new meaning when expressed through art. We hope that you stay a while, and find solitude in these immersive shared experiences.

As we enter into our third spring quarter clouded by COVID-19, artists turn to paper and ink to process this new condition of life on a personal and global scale. From inequities in the healthcare system to reflections on death and what it means to be left alive, emotions impress themselves on the page like the lingering stain of salty tears. We hope that the honesty and rawness of these pieces validate the parts of you that have gone unheard. We promise you, you are not alone. Listen to our stories, and find solace in the community constructed through them.

Let us hold a moment of gratitude for the artists and writers who so beautifully embrace vulnerability. We hope that the process of creation facilitated healing, and that the lived experiences bound within this journal spur growth and catharsis in our readers. While reflection can be painful, without doing so, moving forward becomes impossible. By entering this space of grief and healing, we all take the first step together.

The Capillaries Editorial Team

Miriam Mayhle

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Linda Wang

Lori Mae Yvette Acob

Tisbe Rinehart

Meena Shanmugam

Nede Ovbiebo

Emma Aronoff-Aspaturian

# tapering

*By Rebecca LeVeque*

Japanese Major; Minors: Linguistics and Comparative Literature

petrified of what will happen when they take this  
rock in my stomach  
from me - this buildup of minerals  
that they've been feeding -  
an accumulation of  
medically induced bravery via  
prescription

soon the sands will stop  
running through my veins

and without shores to crash upon,  
how will the storm  
be contained?

into the sea of my symptoms  
i'm  
tapering...  
    tapering...  
        tapering off...

withdrawing back into a shell i will no longer allow to remain soft.

without the weight, i fear i shall be  
no longer grounded -  
no longer able to  
plant my feet upon the earth  
and look into another pair of eyes  
on the same level as mine

soon the words will once again remain  
trapped at the pit of my throat

and without words i'm able to  
force out of my mouth,  
how am i supposed to ask for help?

i return to my own ways  
of  
floating...  
    floating...  
        floating away...

relapsing into my old cowardly days.

without the rock weighing me down, preventing me  
from toppling into the sea  
or drifting off into skies of detrimental safety

am i reduced to nothing?

## **The Writer's Hope**

*By Trevor Little*

English Major; Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies Minor

Below the shadow of your eyes

Lies a chest of sickly green,

Filled with the sand of dreams

Flowing from idle minds.

A story is but a shape made of these sands;

Its characters made of grains,

And words from grit.

We take these shapes and pore over them,

Exercising as much perfection as we can muster

In hopes of making something timeless,

Something worth being proud of.

We struggle, and sometimes we fail.

Unknown to us is the fact that our castles of sand,

However “perfect” they may seem, will crumble against

the sea of time.

Still, we press on.

We create for the world,

And we create for ourselves.

Is that not enough?

Push past your fear,

Your impatience,

Your despair,

And your arrogance.

Join us, and we will scrape the stars

With our art for as long as we may.

Come, and I will show you triumph

In a handful of doubt.

## The Covid Craze

By Zoë Cooper

English Major, Education, Learning, & Society Minor

Thoughtless snotty squalid sniffles from my left.

A contagious congested cough from my right.

“Did they even cover their mouth?”

My lecture hall filled with foolish freshmen feverishly searching for friends.

Social anxiety flickers in their chests,

General anxiety in mine.

Warm sweat gathers in tiny droplets on my forehead,

Covid-19 surrounds me.

I roughly rub my hands together,

The strong smell of sanitizer burns away every brain cell.

At least the germs are gone.

The condensation from my warm breath gathers on the inside of my mask,

It clings to my rosy cheeks, smothering me.

The rancid smell of sour coffee is trapped in my nose.

Rapidly rushing thoughts race through my head

I am trapped in a room of infection.

The waiting is the worst.

Tick, tock, tick, tock, Tick tock.

Am I sick? Am I sick? Am I sick?

It's ironic sitting in an Epidemiology class at a time like this.

Why is everybody pretending it's over?

Thousands of people are dying every day.

Am I in bizzarro world?

My moist thighs feel like superglue against the dingy wooden chair.  
I can't get up,  
you'll have to peel me off like a piece of dead skin on the bottom of  
your foot.  
To be stuck in a loop of hope and despair is the curse.  
I long for the feeling of another's arms embracing me like  
saran wrap.  
I ache for a hug from a friend, a goodbye kiss from a partner,  
the brush of a hand on a shoulder as someone scoots by.  
Can you experience withdrawal from touch?

The days drag on and on and on,  
The end of this horrible pandemic is a cruel mirage.  
Our lives are trapped in Dante's first circle.  
Round and round, I never did like Ferris wheels.  
When I wish upon a star...  
I wish the sickness and death, and the pain of the past two years  
was over.  
If Covid-19 can't be gone,  
I wish I was oblivious.

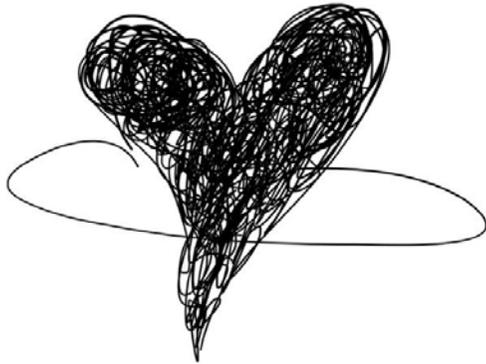
# Into Another Galaxy

By Harry Cabalan

Medicine

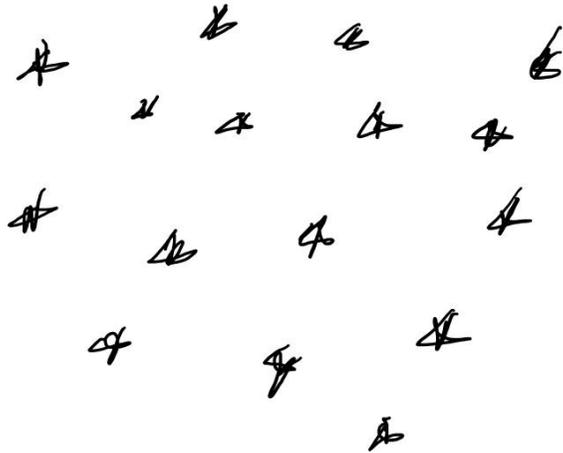
Unknown

If it isn't love,  
Why does It hurt so much to see you leave?  
If it isn't love,  
Why do I pinch myself to see if you're real?  
What is it that I feel? Could it be me and you?  
To the end, never apart.  
And if it isn't love,  
I must be crazy. Because you always,  
Orbit my heart's mind.



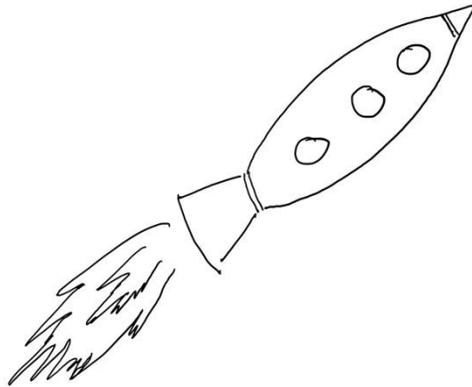
## Cosmic

Love is like a star.  
Flickering at night. Lighting up  
The darkness of evening.  
Night after night,  
Telling a story, a billion years old.  
Ancient. The foundation of our humanhood.  
But when I'm with you,  
Connecting the dots of our constellation,  
It feels so brand new.

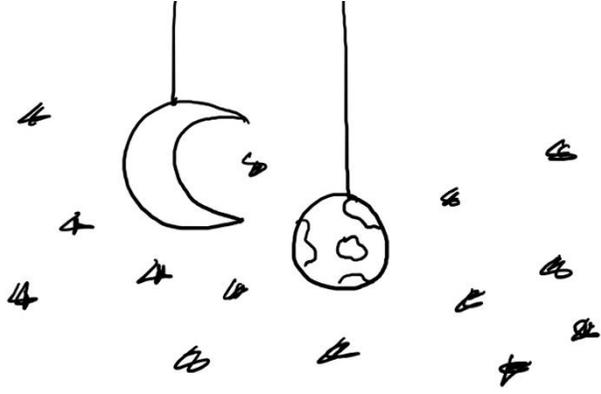


## E.T

Take me to your planet.  
Transport me to an otherworldly earth.  
Send me into a mad euphoria:  
The vibration of your spaceship,  
Piercing through me, as we evade all sense of gravity,  
Floating through galaxies,  
Completely lost of earth's time.  
I need your alien abduction. Because,  
Earth is void of men, like you.



\*\*\* *me ALIEN-style*



## Daydream

I picture us riding in Vespas.  
Down the Italian countryside.  
Arms wrapped around your waist.  
Enchanted by small villages:  
Fresh tomatoes, renewed peppers.  
Running into secluded beaches,  
As sand gets trapped in our feet.  
Escaping all the world's burden,  
Just you, me, and the moon.  
For moments of solitude.  
For moments of us.

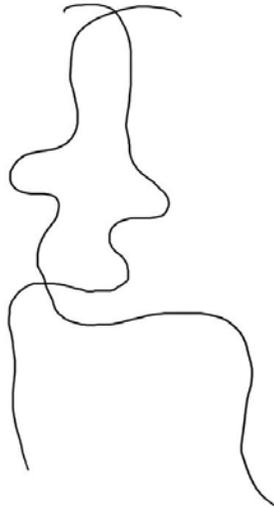
## Great Men

Great men wrote love letters.  
Proclamations of their love,  
To their loves.  
Separated by great distances and voyages.  
Now, we write texts.  
Proclamations of our every mundanity.  
Separated by milliseconds.  
I want a great man.  
So, I voyage great distances.  
Light years.  
Only to realize, they are a thing of the past.



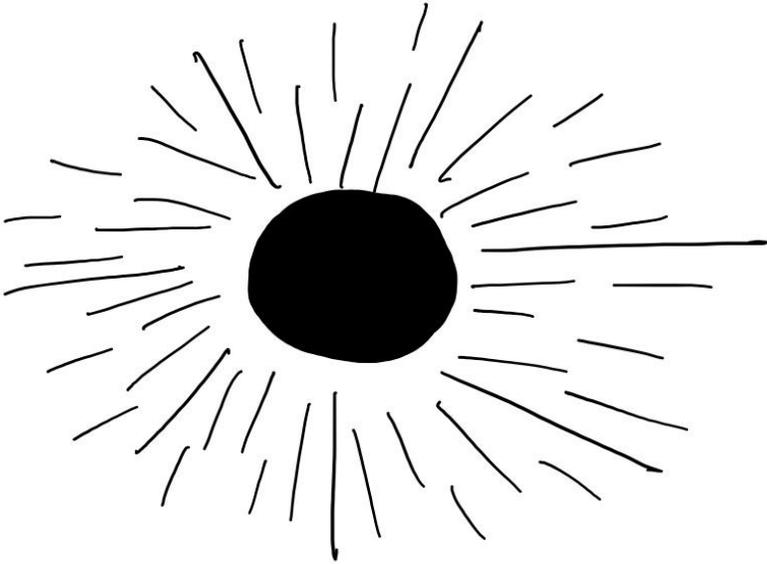
## Connected

Forgiveness is a higher order,  
Some spiritual superiority,  
To look beyond the self,  
And grant someone a karmic second chance.  
An ability beyond the confines of earth,  
Into another galaxy.  
Where our souls communicate:  
It is a recognition of a humanness so deep,  
It transcends our senses,  
On a level where the souls go to meet,  
To say I see you. I am you.  
And I forgive you.



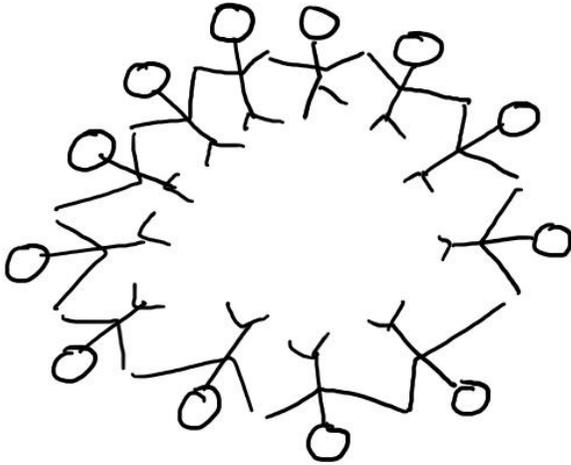
## Orbit

We journey around its center.  
Year after year.  
Returning to where we began.  
Yet, we are illusioned with forward movement.  
So, when you refuse to change.  
Returning to the same old habits.  
I see the sun and her magic.



## Attraction

You became my center.  
The centripetal force of love,  
Of daze and wonder.  
Of hope and naiveté.  
Of wishing we could be so much more:  
Unlimited abundance of love and affection,  
A richness of adoration and protection.  
And now, you gave me the landing sequence.  
To escape your orbit,  
And return to reality.



## Human

You are not otherworldly.  
Not an alien, or species unknown.  
A man. *Human*.  
No abductions to other galaxies.  
No journeys to places undiscovered.  
And certainly, no daydreams,  
Of Vespas, and dates, chaperoned by the moon.  
A man.  
With all the pull of earth's gravity.  
The burdens. The hardships.  
The reality that you were  
Nothing beyond a fantasy.







ቅዳሴ ለግንባታ ገንብ

ግንባታ ለግንባታ ገንብ

## Little Girls and Death

*By Allegra Keys*

English Major

Little girls forced to play with Death on the playground  
Expect to see Him at every function  
Try not to stare Him too long in the eyes  
Learn not to actively seek Him  
Stand thirty feet back from cliffs  
Look once, twice, three times before crossing a street  
Keep their weakened temples free of any foreign substances  
Treat every stranger as though they are rogue bullets.

She also learns to quell any fears surrounding Death  
If He knocks tomorrow, she will open the door with her  
head held high  
Her gaze fixed on the melting sun behind Him.

She will trade in commercialized dreams of happily-ever-after for  
the promise of pearly gates  
Death is only as scary as the thought of having her dreams  
Fail to ever blossom into reality  
So, she will dig up every seedling she once planted  
In order to beat Death at His own game.

These little girls mature into women  
Brains asleep with their eyes wide open  
Calluses over their entire souls, numbing them from feeling  
But she will  
Play chicken on train tracks, nonetheless  
Walk down increasingly darker alleys where needles and knives  
glisten  
Talk to strangers while hoping they are the one bullet  
In a chamber that holds six.

She does not want Death,  
Not the way that people think but  
He is her childhood sweetheart that  
she married too soon and divorced  
Her shadow when she is lonely.  
She fails to know who she is without Him stalking her  
And living without the fear of her soul  
One day being leaked from her body  
Or without the need for excessive caution  
Does not feel like living at all  
But rather, a coma.

Little girls forced to play with Death on the playground  
Become old before their time  
After all, she knows what it means to live and almost die  
She knows what it means to almost die and still not live  
This knowledge will make her spend her nights  
With aching legs  
Never quite accustomed to  
The feeling of them trying to run in opposite directions  
Attempting to catch up to sleep  
She will keep her ears glued to the nearest ticking clock  
Finding she hears a sliver of peace and a sliver of dread  
In between every tick tock  
They bring a painful comfort  
The only type of comfort she knows.

# **Step Up, Legislators: We Need to Prioritize Student Mental Health**

*By Alex Huynh*

Chemical Engineering Major

Testimonial Letter for HB 1834, Excused Absences for Mental Health Reasons

Submitted 01/20/2022

Dear Washington Legislators,

My name is Alex Huynh. I am a third-year engineering student at the University of Washington, writing to support House Bill 1834 concerning student excused absences for mental health reasons. As a citizen of Washington State and a lifetime student of Washington State school systems, I represent the people that the legislation will impact.

Doing well in school was impressed upon me my whole life. As the son of immigrants, I knew that an education would lead my loved ones and me to a better life. I was a straight-A student until my senior year of high school — when my grandpa died. It was hard to walk by his house every day, knowing that the patriarch of our Vietnamese family and the man who helped raise me wouldn't be there to wave hello. I grew frustrated, angry, and guilty. My feelings grew to depression, anxiety, and self-hate. My interior state became reflected in my poor grades. My teachers and professors did their best to help, but they could only do so much, partly because even I couldn't tune into my emotions or manage my mental health. I couldn't pay attention to lectures, write my name down on homework assignments, or get excited when my friends told me about their university acceptances. I dragged myself through the days, feeling more and more like a failure.

This legislation would have allowed me the breathing room to take a step back from school, reach out to family, friends, and professionals for help, and relieve my self-induced pressure. Adding mental health reasons to the list of excusable absences in

Washington State would allow students to prioritize their mental health. Students of all ages could accept that time at school makes them feel worse. Additionally, they could use this time to meet with therapists and counselors or spend time away from the stress of school. Furthermore, it provides validation for students who have heard their whole lives that physical illnesses are the only legitimate ailments. We need to teach the next generation of students how to take care of themselves. It starts with the lesson that they should not sacrifice their mental health for another day at school.

I am writing to you because I am hopeful about the future of mental healthcare in Washington State. Yet, I am also aware of the long road ahead that our state faces. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light mental health issues that innumerable students have been struggling with before the pandemic, as well as systemic inadequacies that have thus far failed us. One bill will not change that. However, HB 1834 will grant the students that need this bill the agency to take care of their mental health, especially those who never had the freedom to do so. The legislation is a step in the right direction. Still, we need to do so much more. Thank you.

For your consideration,

Alex Huynh



**Reflex(ct)ive**

*By Curtis Ludwig*  
Education Major

# Clinical Notes: A Metamorphosis in Two Parts

By Erica Goodkind

Majors: English and Creative Writing

## Part 1: Reduced & Redacted

{~~~~} {Medical Clinic Name}

{Date}

Name: Erica Goodkind

### Clinical Notes

{~~~~} medicine

### Progress Notes

This is a {~~~~} **Phoenix** {~~~~} patient {~~~~} **home**.

{~~~~} is a **lovely** {~~~~} female who returns {~~~~} **abnormal** {~~~~}. She was last evaluated {~~~~}.

The following is a review of her history:

{~~~~} hit her head {~~~~}. She felt {~~~~} **brain**. Subsequently, **she felt** {~~~~} **1** minute. There was {~~~~} of **consciousness** {~~~~} emergency room. {~~~~} symptoms occurred {~~~~}. The {~~~~} occurred again **along the way** {~~~~}. **Around March** {~~~~} **she developed** {~~~~}. {~~~~} and **twitches** {~~~~}. They are associated with pain **described** {~~~~} and **an electric like sensation**. The symptoms initially {~~~~}, then the frequency increased. {~~~~} would happen {~~~~}. {~~~~} led to {~~~~} symptoms. **She** has **discovered** the {~~~~} does wear off after {~~~~}. {~~~~} affect **her ability** {~~~~}. Around that **time** she also **developed** an {~~~~} that is described as moderate to severe {~~~~}. It started **between** {~~~~}. It typically happens between {~~~~} **n** wears **off**. **It** also occurs {~~~~}. {~~~~} **e** {~~~~} **vil** {~~~~} **no** {~~~~} **t** {~~~~} **lyric** {~~~~} **made** {~~~~} **electric** {~~~~} worse. While in the {~~~~} monitoring unit {~~~~} **jerks**. {~~~~} **were not jerks** {~~~~} but appeared to resemble {~~~~}. {~~~~} **form** {~~~~} **was seen**.

**Interval change:** {~~~~} and {~~~~} **working**. {~~~~} evaluating **process**.

The medication list was reviewed and updated as **appropriate**.

**PHYSICAL EXAM**

There were no vitals filed for this visit.

General: {~~~}, cooperative, no acute distress.

**IMPRESSION/REPORT/PLAN:**

{~~~} to {~~~} neurology {~~~}. Follow up in 6 months.

{~~~}, MD

{~~~}

Part 2: Erasure & Emergence

Progress, a phoenix;

home, a lovely abnormal

brain. She felt 1 con-

sciousness along the

way. Around March, she devel-

oped a witchy scribe,

an electric sens-

ation. She discovered her

ability. Time

eloped between. Not

evil, not lyrical. Jerks

were not jerks. Form was

seen in change. A work

in process. A rite. No vit-

als, no distress. One.

## Most of the Time

*By Joelle Cook*

Majors: Art and English: Creative Writing; Urban Ecological  
Design Minor

It stands to reason  
That you should miss  
People you love  
Who you are not with.

Blank face, shrug.  
I don't know if I do.  
I think I'd know if  
I felt something about you.

That's most of the time.  
What you don't see  
Are the infrequent storms  
Beneath an otherwise calm sea.

Maybe it's so muted That my system  
shocks itself  
With a frenzied emotional burst--  
Into the deep end, a forced delve.

Sobbing, muted screaming  
Beneath the sheets  
In the lonely dark  
Late at night.

In the morning it's gone.  
I feel fine, don't remember the feeling  
Feel stupid for having it anyway.  
Back to being balanced with meaning.

Maybe it's like the liver guy, Prometheus.  
Most of the time things are good, really,  
But then he gets his liver pecked out. No biggie.

I don't think I'm numb  
Nor melodramatic.  
This feels normal  
Even if a little sporadic.

## impossible honey

*By Alex Zhu*

MSPH International Health, BS Neuroscience and CHID

To celebrate my mother's birthday  
at her workplace, a banquet is set  
atop a foldable table  
my pasta puttanesca, which for some reason  
she specifically requests  
beef tendon broth, sweet, cinnamon-anise, umami, cilantro & green  
oniony  
made by Liu Ge  
who says I've grown taller  
though the tape measure I stand on still reads 5'8 - 5'9

when I return home after dinner  
Ma regales me in what I've missed  
succulent quail cooked in roses  
clams that my brother dug himself  
"impossible honey," an avalanche of hard-shoveled coconut flesh

on my bed, I return to mountain-esque piles of laundry  
in them, I can see my mother's hands  
laying them down piece by piece, separating  
the familiar from the novel  
how I want to tell her to let  
a plate crash to the floor  
to show her snowflakes that never melt

to cross the bridge and let her see  
how lovely the view is from the passenger's seat

but I find myself hiding my sweater with embroidered flower sleeves  
when she comments that my hair and colorful scrunchies make me  
look like a girl

I am still at a loss for response

I used to be loud and now, I am no longer

today I ate half a double chocolate muffin

does that make it one chocolate muffin?

today I learned of a disappointment of a Woodinville treehouse  
with less wood & childhood wonder, without a roof to stop the rain  
yesterday I saw snow on the rainforest floor, between the ferns  
and dark soil of Point Defiance

what I'm trying to say is

the treehouse is only a disappointment

when you give it a name

that holds an expectancy

that a structure with no walls cannot hold

a display couch is meant to be sat in eventually

sometimes we must be reminded that "vermillion" is

in fact, a shade of red, not green

we must find ourselves in the parallel universe apartments

we once imagined decorating

8 January 2022

## recipe for impossible honey

*By Alex Zhu*

MSPH International Health, BS Neuroscience and CHID

Prepare 24 hours in advance

Olives, capers, anchovies

Your mother's birthday

Garlic, onion, tomato sauce

Friends from middle school who remind you of home

Visit their childhood houses, new houses

Drive across the floating bridge to Bellevue

Let Kara take in the views from the passenger's seat

Meet your impossible honeys in Woodinville

Browse a plant / home decor store

Caress the cactuses

Linger around sweet orchids

Stick your finger in the pitcher plants

Go on a day the café is closed

So you find yourself, instead, sitting in a display couch

After moving the three Channel Orange tinged pillows

Walk around the town long enough to stall for Tate's mom to send the all-clean signal

Materialize Tate's otherwise ethereal home, whose address you recognize from exchanging letters

Whose inhabitants you've definitely done a poetry workshop with

Sit on the hardwood floor, hug a bean bag chair

Share a double chocolate muffin, croissants

For some reason, choose to have a glass of milk (which apparently I pronounce as "melk")

Share some tomatoes and stories of your humanity

Read an essayette from Ross Gay's book of delights (a 25th birthday gift)

Write down 10 observations from the past 24 hours

Read them one at a time in a circle

Recall the preface to Chen Chen's book of poetry

Write!

# **Navigating uncertainty and anxiety during the pandemic: A short reflection**

*By Sravya Valiveti*

BS in Immunology and Infectious Disease, Research  
Interviewer for Kaiser Permanente Health Research Institute

Feeling stuck with fear of change and many unknowns

Disappointed over lack of control of external circumstances,

Desperately searching for light, hope and a sense of predictability

...

Feeling helpless – unable to offer direct support to family, friends  
and community

Being engulfed by collective pain, loss and grief,

...

Dreading every time the phone rings,  
apprehensive of someone close falling ill with COVID-19,

Constantly reminded of the impermanence of life

...

Feeling absolutely powerless,

not knowing how to grieve the loss of a loved one

Grappling with guilt for not having spent enough time with them

...

Slipping into patterns of unhealthy thinking at night,  
'Catastrophizing', unable to turn my stream of thoughts off  
Wanting to hold onto the past and stay in my comfort zone

...

Struggling with lack of authentic, meaningful in-person connections  
Feeling disconnected and defeated,  
in times of social isolation and remote technology

...

Exasperated due to prolonged stagnancy  
Consumed with feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt  
Watching my strengths or belief in myself wane and my weaknesses  
exposed

...

Feeling broken day in and day out,  
And worn out from having to be resilient  
Holding onto last reserves of inner strength to keep going

...

Feeling helpless in moments where life just feels like broken glass,  
Distracting myself, trying to self-care without much respite,  
Sitting with difficult thoughts and processing it all  
Accepting feeling broken while attempting to be whole again

...

Reconnecting with family after two grueling years away from home  
Holding onto near and dear ones tightly,  
Looking out for each other, offering words of advice to make it  
through

...

Embracing stillness, savoring every moment with loved ones,  
Humbled, reflecting on what truly matters in life  
Taking stock of things that I'm grateful for

...

Moving past failures, regrets, lost friendships, lost opportunities and  
instability  
Towards seeking inner healing, balance and self-compassion  
Finding my way to regain composure and stay centered

...

Re-calibrating my life with renewed vision and intentions

Giving up old, unhealthy patterns that no longer serve me

Letting go of rigid life plans and instead, embracing fluidity,

Propelling myself forward in a better direction

# Hello Again

*By Gabrielle Sieloff*

English Major, Associate Degree in Arts and Sciences

Rain runs down my windowpanes  
Rushing rivers cutting across the glass landscape  
And in this moment, all I hear is the steady tapping  
Breathe in, breathe out.

We teach each other new ways to be  
In simple homes that have become my world these past two weeks  
It is not my place to question authority  
Just this once, I want to question decisions of necessity

The mist coats my face as I walk down the street  
Passing cars, passing people, all with places to be  
I wonder if those places will include me  
Breathe in, breathe out.

We sit in crowded rooms, perfunctorily pierced with a question  
or two  
I want to be here  
I tell myself I really do  
But I must ask myself the point in being here too  
Is this necessity a desire for something I long forgot what it was like  
to possess?

This clawing in my chest is a symptom of a different kind  
A beast of anxiety as I search for the finish line  
We relearn how to be together, even if together is too soon for  
this weather  
I'll need a new umbrella before this rain lets up  
Breathe in, breathe out.

That'll be the day we'll see our faces as if for the first time  
I'm so excited to meet you all over again  
And maybe one day in our memory all that we'll ever see  
Is the moments the clouds broke apart

Breathe in, breathe out.  
Take in the world, it's brighter now.

## High Time

*By Nomura*

Cinema and Media Studies Major

I thought it would be therapeutic, seeing the prisons of my past  
ripped apart brick by brick.

That the cloud of smoke would free me from the yokes of  
rumination.

Jacquard carpets and Cheshire cat smiles,  
A tug on locked doors holding only stripped keys,  
Silence caught in rippling sails,  
The evidence of existence  
burned at the Opera.

If every funhouse mirror stood in front of was shattered,  
Would the pieces picked from the scattered remains ripple with  
distorted memory too?

A silhouette of what once was, metamorphosed by the tears of a  
hollowed heart.

The carnage of a forgotten past lies before me,  
Don't stories end with the same sincerity as the receding sea?

Efd` WWA` WSW@YZf  
6m5Ug\ Jf5 \ a YX  
A c`YW `Uf6]cgMYbWYgA Ucf



## **It's All Good/Be You**

*By Will Sanchez*

Comparative History of Ideas Major

Everything will be good, if you do as you should,  
everything's not so bad; I hope this is understood.  
If you try then you can, you just have to understand.  
I feel like everyone is part of 'The Plan.'  
Yes, most of the time you'll have to listen,  
but remember that everyone is different,  
so don't worry about what they all say,  
in the end you just have to find your way.

Let me try to rephrase that last part;  
don't fall apart just listen to your heart.  
And no, it doesn't require you to be smart,  
you just have to do something that's in your heart.  
As long as you take the time to really be true,  
I bet that happiness will find you.  
Don't worry, keep trying, you'll make it through,  
you'll see that you're worth it and others will too.

I'm telling you, you got it, don't worry about it.  
As long as you be you, they can't ever doubt it.  
So just make yourself shine, before you know it time will fly,  
then again, before you know, it everything will be fine.

# The Intersection of Food, Medicine and Public Health

*By Sravya Valiveti*

BS in Immunology and Infectious Disease, Research  
Interviewer for Kaiser Permanente Health Research Institute

Nutrition plays a major role in maintaining quality of life and healthy food choices or eating patterns have a positive impact on our long-term health outcomes. Meals that provide nourishment enable us to be healthy not just physically but also essential for our socio-emotional well-being. Prolonged levels of poor nutrition can act as a risk factor that may predispose patients to certain chronic diseases over time.

Current research shows that a person's food intake has a direct impact on their overall health status and well-being. It is typical for patients diagnosed with chronic conditions to receive nutrition counseling and be advised on modifying dietary practices. These patient education tools are great for improving awareness and serve as primary preventative measures. However, for patients to follow-through on such dietary guidelines, accessibility to fresh, nutritious foods and cooking resources are factors that also need to be taken into consideration. The aspects of affordability and accessibility to nutrition resources or healthy food options often go unaddressed in the medical community. A holistic approach is needed to thoroughly assess an individual's health/resource needs and nutrition status.

This raises two interesting questions: Should primary care physicians be trained to ask patients about access to healthy food and nutritional intake during their visit to collect data? Additionally, how do we go about addressing the root causes of inaccessibility to nutritious food? Currently, providing medical recommendations and nutrition counseling for the patient's diagnosis could constitute a "band-aid fix" if availability/access to resources or factors surrounding the patient's lifestyle are not being addressed concurrently.

This is where the intersection of public health and medicine comes into play. A nutritional screening can be utilized as part of a comprehensive health history during a patient visit. For this to work,

the screening should go beyond asking about a person's diet intake to gain more context about their social history and lifestyle that could help in identifying other health risk factors and what resources they do/don't have access to. This could help in meeting the patient where they are by tailoring a realistic action plan and modifications that are a better fit.

In addition, there could be several factors that would become important when evaluating nutritional risk: low income or living below poverty line, employment status, those who are disproportionately impacted by structural inequities, people with disabilities, living in 'food deserts' or not having access to kitchen utilities. Further, older adults are also at higher risk for dietary deficiency. Primary care physicians, being the first line of contact with patients, must be well-informed on community resources that they can connect their patients to and work with patients to set small goals that they could follow-up on during their next visit.

Assessment of nutritional risk using a rapid screening tool can help with tracking patients who are at risk of malnutrition and who may be at higher risk of developing chronic diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular conditions, obesity, osteoporosis (in older adults) or tooth decay in the long run. This initial screening would help immensely with: identifying risk factors/resource gaps, early access to community resources or referrals, early intervention, timely nutrition management and patient education.

It goes without saying that access to quality food and preventative healthcare is not just a medical issue but also a public health issue. The best way to address this would be for primary care clinics to work in tandem with local public health organizations to organize farmer's markets or mobile food banks that offer fresh produce and cooking resources at subsidized rates that ensure a healthy community. There is a dire need for incentivizing healthy food options in neighborhoods where fast-food joints are more convenient and cheaper than access to healthy food options. Similarly, there needs to be increased access to culturally relevant foods (CRF) that are specific to certain communities and needed for improved health outcomes in that population.

Community health workers or community resource specialists also play an integral role in advocating, promoting awareness and identifying barriers through outreach in their

communities. They can make the process of navigating and accessing local resources/systems easier for patients and help them meet their needs. At times, cooking can be thought of as this complex activity or that healthy, nutritious meals are often not tasty enough. This can be addressed by sharing recipes for easy-to-cook nutritious meals with easily available ingredients through flyers or on social media could be the start to demystifying the process of cooking healthy. With a rising demand for food in the US, food insecurity must be discussed widely on a policy level to ensure that funding to public food assistance programs like SNAP, brown bag (for seniors) national school lunch and WIC programs, expands yearly. There could also be FDA/health policies passed that require food and beverages to meet certain nutrition criteria before becoming available to communities.

Going forward, an important question that will need to be addressed: How do we increase buy-in among people to fully take advantage of local resources available to cook balanced, nutritious and delicious meals for themselves and their families? Other aspects of this topic that need to be explored further are: a) incorporating public health factors and framework into medical decision-making at the primary care level to adequately address a patient's unique needs b) empower patients and lead them towards resources that can help with personal responsibility for their own health behaviors/food choices on their own terms

Access to quality healthcare, nutritious food and safe housing are all basic needs for survival – those who are struggling to make ends meet shouldn't have to be forced to choose one over the other.

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## **Blissful Red**

*By Olivia Frost*

English Major

The chanting is growing too loud;  
I beg them to stop, and silence meets me.  
A whisper in my ear is all they are,  
blowing air against my neck,  
biting at the soft flesh,  
because they love the tender and vulnerable.  
To do what they ask,  
risks surrendering my body to forceful hands.  
And they love my body;  
the way it moves delights them.  
Wandering eyes is what they possess;  
nothing more than eyes, I remind myself.  
Nothing more than hands.  
Nothing more than protruding teeth.  
The chanting is beginning to sound  
like a series of cheers as I eye the kitchen knife.  
See, they know who I am—

They know that I will pick up this knife  
and do what they please.

Louder and louder and louder they chant.  
Because they love the tender and vulnerable;  
foam bubbles from their mouths  
at the thought of us.

And as my hand grips the knife,  
I can no longer hear my own thoughts.  
Surrendering my soul, body, and mind,  
I plunge the knife into my stomach.  
The chanting grows quiet,  
and surrendering is so blissful.

## Dying to Survive

By Allegra Keys

English Major

They said, *Only the elderly and the disabled will die.*  
They positioned “only” in front of  
That knife of a sentence  
Coating its serrated edge  
Making it easier to swallow  
For those that were handed a blade  
Instead of falling into the hands of privilege.

Pandemics are peculiar invisible beasts in that sense.  
Falling from the polluted heavens  
In the fashion of locusts and boils.  
Transforming antlike humans into nothing but pus  
Or gifting them a God complex and ability to buzz.  
The latter decides  
Who is the fittest and who is the fat  
Standing to get trimmed.

So tell me,  
God made out of humanity’s bowels,  
how do you quantify a life?  
How do you mar a soul with  
ink and numbers?  
Is the value found in how fast a name would lose  
its face and just be a thing that people say?  
In the foundations of temples where  
hands no longer clasp in invocation?  
In how much land a body of water has  
the potential to wet when disturbed?  
In how long a bloodline could trickle down  
a tree before becoming bark?  
In the amount of hate passed  
between organs and tissue?  
In society’s papier-mâché sculpture  
of a burden?

In seconds that slime by  
or years that seem to fly?

Tell me, God of nothing and no one, what  
are you worth?

What  
am I worth?

Because there is a mountain that won't be parted,  
Composed of masks, vaccines, ventilators, and beds  
And survival is on the bright side of the peak  
But the world has a strange proclivity  
Of plucking the presumed weak  
And cutting off their feet.

But foolish is the one that wields the knife  
Underestimating blood's affinity  
To spread thin and make room for continued life  
Even if it's been said, *Resources will only be spent on those  
expected to survive.*

## Team Bios

**Miriam Mayhle** is a senior majoring in biology and plans to pursue a career in medicine after she graduates. During her almost three years on *Capillaries* she has been an editor, publisher, and, currently, president. Aside from the journal, some of her favorite things include reading, cooking and making her friends watch *Derry Girls*.

**Nikki Talebi** is a senior studying English and political science. She is considering pursuing a pre-law track or a career in publishing. In her free time, she enjoys reading, writing poetry, listening to music, exploring Seattle, and attending as many concerts as she can.

**Chelsea Ng** is a junior studying biochemistry and is planning to study medicine in the future. When she's not studying or working, you'll find her nose buried in an (e)book, spending quality time with friends and family, and searching for what to eat next.

**Michelle Li** is a senior studying physiology and is working towards a career in medicine. As a PR officer for *Capillaries*, she loves designing creative advertisements and social media posts. Outside of the journal, she enjoys playing tennis, coordinating bomb fits, trying to become TikTok famous, and drinking milk-based beverages.

**Isabelle Chang** is a senior with the intended major of MCD biology. She plans on pursuing a career as a physician assistant. Aside from college, she loves to cook, food blog, hike, and assemble charcuterie boards.

**Neva Crnković Hahn** is a senior studying comparative literature and biology. In the future, she hopes to pursue a career in medicine overseas in Croatia. In her free time, she enjoys writing, reading and watching horror movies!

**Varuna Ravi** is a junior studying Public Health and pursuing a career in research. She is an editor and on the publishing team for *Capillaries*. Outside of school, she loves listening to music, eating all types of chocolate, and reading reddit posts.

**Niki Leshgold** is a junior studying English and is hoping to pursue a career in medicine. She loves working as a Public Relations officer for *Capillaries Journal*. Outside of school, she loves hiking, baking and finding the best coffee shops around Seattle!

**Linda Wang** is a senior studying Marketing and English. She is considering a career in nonprofit marketing. In her free time, she likes to journal, explore Seattle, try every restaurant on the Ave, and learn new ideas!

**Esha Patel** is a freshman studying neuroscience and is working towards a career in medicine. She loves designing social media posts as a public relations officer for the journal. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, kayaking and trying new breakfast restaurants with her friends!

**Lori Mae Yvette Calibuso Acob** is a senior studying Public Health-Global Health. She is on the pre-med track and plans to pursue a career in Family Medicine or Cardiology. When she's not working, she loves spending time in the gym, bouldering, cooking meals from different countries, and spending time with friends and family!

**Tisbe Rinehart** is a junior studying Comparative History of Ideas (CHID) and Ecological Restoration. Her most cherished simple pleasure is reading a book in the sun while sipping on her morning coffee. She feels the most at home when outdoors and spends her free time hiking, backpacking, climbing, and anything that involves playing in the dirt.

**Meena Shanmugam** is a junior studying Microbiology and is working towards pursuing a career in medicine. When she's not doing anything college-related, she's spending time with friends and family, watching documentaries, and creating niche Spotify playlists.

**Nede Ovbiebo** is a sophomore intending to major in Public Health-Global Health and minor in Bioethics and Humanities. She plans on pursuing a career within the areas of health policy, medicine, and academia. In her free time, Nede enjoys reading, trying new coffee spots, and baking.