

LETTER

from the Editors

In one of her many articles on the value of narrative medicine, Dr. Rita Charon notes, “When health professionals write, in whatever genre and diction they choose, about clinical experiences, they as a matter of course discover aspects of the experience that, until writing, were not evident to them.” This speaks directly to HEAL’s primary mission—to serve as a venue for medical students and healthcare professionals to reflect and discover.

The pages of HEAL Volume 11 further demonstrate the value of creative, reflective expression and its byproduct—humanism and compassion in healthcare. Throughout this issue you’ll find writers working through their experiences in order to actively practice better medicine. The winner of our 5th Annual Humanism in Medicine Essay Contest, fourth-year medical student Ariana Trautmann, is no exception. In “Speaking Up,” Trautmann reflects on a time she witnessed colleagues behaving insensitively toward a patient (page 16). Although she initially wishes she were brave enough to reprimand them, she corrects the situation not by calling out her colleagues, but by redirecting her focus on the patient. The others notice and fall in line. Trautmann writes, “That day taught me there are many ways to handle any given situation...Causing a scene certainly would not have made the patient feel more comfortable. But the warm blanket did. Someone sitting by her and acknowledging her did...I will carry this moment with me for the rest of my career.”

Visual art also provides a space for reflection. *Eye*, created by third-year medical student Julianna Kacheris, was the runner-up for this year’s cover art contest (page 33). Of *Eye*, Kacheris says:

I was inspired to paint an eye because I feel as though the colored part of our eye, or iris, is a wonderful representation of how unique we are as humans. Whether green, brown, blue or hazel, no two sets of eyes are identical. Each have an array of patterns that fold onto one another. Similarly, we each have our own story, our own struggles we are dealing with, our own hopes, dreams and fears. As a medical student in clinical rotations, one of the greatest gifts I've been given is the opportunity to look each person in their eyes and listen to their story unfold. In doing so, a whole realm of possibility opens – trust, empathy, support, even love. Eyes serve as vessels for human connection. My hope is that when people see Eye, they will feel inspired to form these connections themselves and will be reminded of the remarkable gift that it is.

Of course, life is more than medicine. Thus, HEAL also provides a venue for our community to observe and reflect on the outside world. The photography in Volume 11 is largely focused on the beauty of the nonhuman natural world we interconnect with on a daily basis. And of special note is “Ladybug,” a poem (page 30) by Dr. Stephen Quintero in which the speaker meditates on a soothing encounter with one of these dotted-wing beauties: “In the spark of a moment it flew through the air, / swaying this way and that way and with it my cares.”

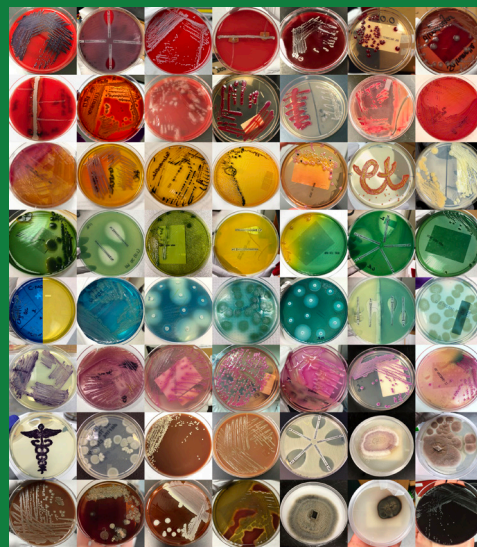
Please enjoy Volume 11 of HEAL, and may you find comfort, awareness, and healing in the pages that follow.

Warmly,

Tana Jean Welch, PhD



Suzanne Leonard Harrison, MD



On the Cover

AGAR ART COLLAGE

Elizabeth E. Tremblay, MPH
Class of 2023

At its core, the agar art collage is just agar, soy-based gelatinous bacteria food, and microbes, bacteria and fungi. While they can occasionally cause human disease, their presence on agar in the lab allows us to properly diagnose and treat those with an infection. Through this collage, I'm admiring their presence and reframing it, quite literally, in a more positive light.

The collage contains 10+ different types of agar and 30 different species of bacteria and fungi.

Over the years, I've amassed a collection of about 2,000 photos. I simply selected a few for this collage that would be a visually appealing representation of the diversity we see on a weekly basis in the clinical laboratory.

Elizabeth Tremblay is a former infection control practitioner, current medical student, and always a lifelong learner.