

FROM THE EDITORS' DESK

The Art of Medicine: JGIM Introduces *Sketchbook*Audrey Young, MD¹, Anna Reisman, MD², and Jeremy Graham, DO, MA³¹Evergreen Hospital and Medical Center, Kirkland, WA, USA; ²Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, CT, USA; ³CHAS Health, Spokane, WA, USA.

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Busy physicians employ all manner of tricks to capture the essence of each patient in the medical record. Some include personal details—*granddaughter's wedding approaching, loves to fish with dog Tuffy, walks to wife's grave every day*. Before electronic charts became the norm, Dr. Alan Blum sketched quick renditions of his patients to capture an expression, a gesture, a feeling. Readers may see parallels to the physician-poet William Carlos Williams, who, in the tiny space between one patient and the next, would jot down a line or two of description or dialogue in his notebook.

We are pleased to feature four sketches from Dr. Alan Blum in the inaugural publication of the *Healing Arts* category *Sketchbook*. Collected from volumes of as-yet unprinted images, Dr. Blum offers here “Patient Ladies,” four annotated drawings of women that capture a moment. Readers may also enjoy some of his other published brief clinical portraits.¹

Drawing serves both artist and viewer. For the artist, drawing slows us down, helps us observe more closely. The viewer must also pause, think, examine, notice. A growing body of data suggests that art observation enhances skills crucial to physical examination and diagnosis.^{2,3} Many medical schools now provide a variety of exercises in museums, as a means of improving skills of perception as well as one's descriptive language, and often as a way to stimulate discussion of the artist's intent and effect.

Sketchbook is a new platform for *JGIM* readership to enjoy, contemplate, and offer their own visual art to a clinical audience. *Sketchbook* invites single-page submissions of black-and-white art from technical photo realism to evocative doodles, from portrait to anatomic observation, from comic book art to landscapes. Graphic novelist Marjane Satrapi asserted that “drawing [is the] first language of human beings, before writing.”⁴ Pictures and abstracted symbols convey meaning; one *sees* a thing before assigning words and names. *Sketchbook* is to be an avenue for just such “meaning-making,” presenting physician and patient drawings as a tool of resilience, fortification against burnout, and a means to express the joy of caring for human beings.

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