

Margins of viability

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Abstract A poem reflecting the compassion, conflicts, dilemmas and outcome in the management of an extremely premature 22⁺⁴-week gestation baby girl. Challenges faced by neonatologists in offering optimal care to extremely low birth weight (ELBW) newborn infants and their families is summarised in this poem as an emotional transaction between the clinician and the periviable baby.

Keywords Margins of viability · Extremely low birth weight (ELBW) · Neonatal care · Threshold of viability · Periviability · Ethics

Margins of viability

I could listen to her pounding heart, so filled with love and hope
I could feel her gentle breath, so fast, as she struggled to cope
I could see her eyes held tight, as if too shy to watch the world around her
I could sense she holding my fingers, a gentleness beyond the soothing words.

She had the softest skin I have ever felt, so pale, yet blushes with cry
She had the subtlest movements I have ever seen, so delicate and detailed to try

She had the deepest thoughts I have ever witnessed, so different and heavenly to be
She had the rarest affection I have ever sought for, so fulfilling I fail to narrate.

The sparkle in her eyes, behind the wale of lids debating whether to open
The spikes and waves in her little brain, telling me something I strive to grasp
The lights and sound of machines holding her life, woke her up from a wondrous dream
The body and mind slowly swept her away, to a destiny so hard to explain.

May be I have failed, to care enough for her?
May be I have trailed, not acting fast enough for her?
May be I have tried it all, but her soul had better plans?
May be I have touched her heart, but she indeed has touched mine for sure!

Compliance with ethical standards I hereby confirm the following:

There are no prior publications or submissions with any overlapping information.
The manuscript has not been and will not be submitted to any other journal while it is under consideration by the Irish Journal of Medical Science.
I have no real or perceived interest of conflict in this manuscript production. As the sole and corresponding author, I confirm that there is no grant/honorarium/payment in the production of this manuscript.
I have conceived the idea of this poem and wrote the entire submission and reviewed the final submitted version.

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