

## DOCTORS, PATIENTS, FAMILIES AND HEART DISEASE

**SUMMARY:** “Angor Animi” John Stone, a cardiologist and professor at Emory University, who is also the author of three volumes of poetry. This brief story portrays a cardiologist who provides continuity care to a young man with a heart defect. Four years post open-heart surgery, the patient develops CHF and deteriorates. His mother is a loving background presence. No other family members are referred to. Mother and doctor discuss son’s awareness of his impending death, before she interrupts her vigil to take a brief rest. While she is gone, the patient dies, the doctor weeps, and the EKG continues to show electrical activity until the mother’s return.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How would you describe the relationship between mother and son? Patient and doctor? Mother and doctor?
2. In what sense does the cardiologist “balance” the dynamic between mother and son?
3. What relational aspects make this a satisfying story, despite its pathos?

### TRIANGULATION ISSUES:

1. Some Permanent Perfect Parent - on part of both mother and son toward doctor
2. Mostly successful therapeutic alliance
  - a. Doctor balances mother-son dynamics
  - b. Doctor as surrogate father
  - c. Doctor’s presence creates more stability, allows for more dynamic interactions
  - d. Mother supports doctor-patient relationship