

## **FAMILIES, SYSTEMS AND HEALTH JOURNAL**

**As poetry editor, co-editor and reviewer for this journal, my goals were to encourage family physicians and other healthcare professionals to appreciate poetry (and later 55-word stories) as a means of self-expression, of deepening insight into patients and self, and recognizing and valuing our common humanity.**

**What eventually came to be known as the Sharing Our Stories: Narratives, 55 Word Stories, Poetry section was developed to accept pieces that utilized creative writing-narratives, poetry, or 55 word stories to capture key experiences of wellness, illness, healing the health care system, and/or standout moments in healthcare.**

**We encouraged writing that told a story in an engrossing and compelling manner rather than merely described an event, but rather showed evidence of reflection and insight, and engage readers' emotions as well as their intellects.**

**We hoped that, in general, submissions would follow the basic rule of good writing: "Show, don't tell." While avoiding simplistic writing, and expressing both nuance and depth, we also wanted submissions to be understandable and accessible to journal readers. We looked for pieces that readers might want to revisit or discuss with a colleague.**

**My editorial and review philosophy was an educational one as much as possible. The journal did outright reject submissions that lacked any sign of craft or genuine feeling, but overall the goal was to encourage author's efforts with supportive, constructive, very specific feedback about how to beneficially revise their submission.**

**Since most readers (and reviewers) for the journal did not have extensive background or training in evaluating poetry, our criteria for publication were somewhat different than those of a literary magazine. We asked reviewers to consider the following questions:**

- 1) Is the work well-written? (you don't have to have an English Ph.D. to have an opinion about that). Do you like the way the author uses language? Are the images memorable? Does the author make good use of metaphor and other figures of speech?
- 2) Is the work accessible and understandable? Just because it's poetry doesn't mean it should be excessively obscure or confusing. Of course, it can – even should – be open to multiple interpretations and evoke different responses in readers.
- 3) Does the work move you emotionally in some way? Did you find it beautiful, or heartbreaking, or uplifting, or poignant, or funny?
- 4) Does the work make you think? After reading it, do you consider how you would react in a similar situation? Does it make you reaffirm or question some core value? Is it a piece you might want to share with a colleague, patient, or student?

We are interested in your from-the-heart and from-the-head reaction, because you represent the journal readers. We want them to like the poem, to feel something after reading it, and even to think about it for a moment. That's all.