

CONFESSIONS OF A PROFESSIONAL PATIENT

Once again, I am being watched. They look at me often through windows and hidden cameras. Today they observe me at the front of the auditorium. They are curious about my every move, fascinated by each tremor, facial expression, gasp, body slump, or chin quiver. They ask whether I want to know more, or nothing at all.

Three young doctors, their necks splashed crimson with fear, come up one at a time, to deliver the same, life-changing news to me. Their hands tremble and voices shake in these encounters as they disclose that my tests indicate I am facing a potentially serious, or even fatal, disease.

Although the audience includes students, qualified physicians, psychologists and a renowned rabbi, I forget they are there because I am overwhelmed by the emotion of the moment.

The first time I hear the news, I sob and threaten to end my life. The second time I become angry, curse, yell, and eventually leave the room. The third time, in deep denial, I say to the young doctor, "Don't be so serious, sweetheart, I am going to be fine." Nervous giggles echo around the room.

Later in feedback sessions, most of the news bearers want to know what they did right and what they could have done better. I am most afraid of the ones who seem unconcerned and completely satisfied with what they have done.

I often wonder if I will see them again in another standardized teaching session, or perhaps in real life, should a family member or I ever be their actual patient.

I leave the building and walk quickly to the medical center garage, no longer watched and happy to be healthy . . . at least until I receive my next script.

Author Bio: Beth McKim resides in Houston, Texas with her husband, Buddy, and their Labradoodle, Lucy. After working for twenty four years as a Staff and Parent trainer and Director of Volunteers for Child Protective Services, Beth currently enjoys studying Creative Writing and Spanish. A former marathon runner and triathlete, she is now an avid swimmer, Yoga enthusiast, and overall fitness devotee. She feels particularly rewarded by her part- time job as a medical actress. bethmckim@comcast.net