
POETRY | FALL 2021

There is Nothing Wrong with You

By Priya Sury

“What’s wrong with me, doctor?”

There is nothing wrong with you, with
your wild and excited eyes looking
around the room and the river of words
that come tumbling loudly out of your
mouth.

There is nothing wrong with your
tender, soft abdomen. Nothing we can
detect with our lab tests, nothing lit up
or darkened abnormally on your CT
scan

There is nothing wrong with your aching
heart, at least it is not releasing any
enzymes or creating abnormal electrical
patterns that we can see.

It’s a normal response to the *khat* you used to
keep up with “the young guys” at your Amazon
warehouse, more each day so you could move
more and more boxes.

I’m sorry that your worry about your teenaged
son who has been barricading himself in his
room, isolated from his friends and increasingly
despondent during the pandemic, has been
sending pain messages to your inconsolable
intestines.

I’m sorry that you had to get your mama and a
few of your friends onto a video call, hidden on
your phone under your blankets, to make you
feel safe. To be able to step in, as one friend did
(her disembodied voice startling me!), when

they worried your brown skin was preventing your pain from being fully heard.

There is nothing wrong with your wrist. It's not red or tender, it's moving perfectly, and you leaned your weight on it to sit up from the cozy cocoon of warmed blankets you were napping in.

I'm sorry that coming in here and telling me that something hurt was your only option for getting something to eat tonight.

There's nothing wrong with your brain, at least not anything we can fix now that your stroke is completed and that parts of the tissue have died without oxygen.

I'm sorry that when this started 2 days ago, you had to wait until midnight of the new year for your insurance to kick in, and that when I saw you at 12:10 it was too late. I'm sorry that I found the reasoning hard to believe, because of your heavy horn-rimmed glasses, soft sweater, and middle-aged white skin.

There's nothing wrong with you that we can fix so far away from the city's catheterization lab while your heart tissue suffocates.

I'm sorry I got angry when you first said "I won't go to *that hospital*, half the doctors don't speak English there". Then, with a voice tinged with shame, you told me that you'd rather die than leave your family with nothing, and that you're afraid. The last man in this room was afraid of what this would cost his family too. And the one before.

Priya Sury, MD, PhD (she/her) practices emergency medicine to serve the most vulnerable patients in our healthcare system. Dr. Sury sees problems in the Emergency Department as manifestations of society's most critical issues and is passionate about the Emergency Departments' role in improving quality of care for underserved patients across the Twin Cities and rural Minnesota. She brings a creative, synergistic approach, drawing on her undergraduate majors in Anthropology and Spanish and her D.Phil (PhD) in Theology to think about how interdisciplinary data can be used to meet the bio-psycho-social needs of our diverse emergency department patients. Dr. Sury received her medical degree from the University of Minnesota and completed a residency in Emergency Medicine at Regions Hospital.