The emotions involved in medicine are as gripping and poignant as those of any profession. Some people process the angst of close contact with life and death by indulging in introspection, others by giving voice to their feelings in verse. Here, four individuals with ties to Dartmouth share poems they’ve written about especially moving events.

**Rural Health Clinic, 4:00 a.m.**

By Thomas C. Garland, M.D., M.P.H.

“I feel faint, Doc.”

“You can’t faint, you’re lying down.”

Silence.

No breath.

No pulse.

Who will call the code?

Who will come running?

Who will pump?

Who will breathe?

Who will shock?

Who will, who will, who will . . . . . . .

You drive your hand up

Through the ceiling,

Through the roof,

Through the clouds, past the stars

And

You grab God by the throat—

Then,

You do.

Garland, a 1971 graduate of Dartmouth Medical School, spent 24 years practicing internal medicine on Deer Isle, off the coast of Maine. He and a couple of other physicians, plus a mid-level practitioner, provided 24/7 care for the island’s 2,600 year-round residents—more than half of whom have some tie to the fishing industry.

“We specialized in whatever walked through the door,” Garland says. Medical emergencies there have “a totally different character,” he recalls. Deer Isle is connected to the mainland by a bridge, but the nearest hospital is 25 miles away. “You never feel as alone,” Garland explains, when a hospital is close at hand. But on Deer Isle, in a crisis “it’s just you, the patient, and whatever you can create.”

The poem above describes one such incident. “I was alone in the clinic before dawn, with a patient and his wife,” Garland explains. “I was seeing him for chest and abdominal pains, when the patient uttered those words and had a cardiac arrest.” But, he continues, “we successfully resuscitated him, and he is alive today.”

Also a 1965 graduate of Dartmouth College, Garland has been writing poetry ever since he took a creative writing class as an undergraduate. “I write about what I know,” he says, calling his poems “small vignettes” from a physician’s point of view. “My whole purpose in writing poetry,” he continues, “is clarity: to try to shed light on some human experience.”

In 2000, Garland decided to try a different kind of human experience and traded rural medicine for inner-city medicine. He moved to Washington, D.C., and joined a nonprofit organization called Unity Health Care that delivers care to patients in homeless shelters, the correctional system, and underserved neighborhoods.

But he recently retired from medicine—and perhaps from writing poetry—upon stepping down from Unity in August 2009. “Although I have maintained my licensure,” he says, “I think it is unlikely that I will ever practice again. Medicine consumes me when I practice it, so I think I have to be either in or out.”

And, he admits, “I don’t know if in retirement I’ll be able to be in touch” with the emotions that for so long stoked his creative impulses—which include prose, too; Garland wrote an essay about practicing medicine on Deer Isle that was published in Dartmouth Medicine several years ago; see dartmed.dartmouth.edu/0906/01.
The Healing Bond
By Stanley Willenbring, Ph.D.

On my way to work, pedaling hard fingers bent by the morning cold, dwarfed in the shadow of the hospital wall, I passed a man walking toward the entry. He stopped suddenly clutching in hand a tearing bag full of things familiar. He craned his neck, with his other hand shielding his eyes for the sun. “Maybe he sees something interesting in the sky,” Willenbring recalls thinking. Then he realized what the man was looking at: “I saw a little person at one of the windows” on the pediatric floor. The child was “making big, arcing waves with his arm.” Suddenly, “the dad also started making big, arcing waves with his arm. The kid was almost like a little reflection of the dad.”

The tableau was “very poignant,” says Willenbring. “It really struck me,” so much so that he went straight to his lab and “started jotting down little pieces of imagery.” He kept working on the poem off and on for several years and “finally got it to where I liked it.”

He began writing poetry thanks to a humanities requirement when he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he began writing poetry thanks to a humanities requirement when he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Isle; he was an undergraduate at the University of Maine in Presque Island; he chose a course in writing verse and found it “a wonderful experience. In fact, he adds, “I’ve been very fortunate in all my educational experiences,” including at Dartmouth. He says his lab advisor, Dr. Joyce DeLeo and Jay Leiter, “really taught me how to write science, how to make it clear and concise.” Rather like a good poem.

Where the Soul Meets the Body
By Hanghang Wang

White walls, nurses harrying by, machines beeping, That’s where he spent this early spring. Sedated and intubated, peaceful and quiet, Eyes tightly shut as if he was enjoying a dream. In the deepest of his dreams.

I came by to check on him, Even though he couldn’t make out what was ahead of him; Even though he couldn’t talk back to me; I held his hands with mine.

I saw him, I heard him, I felt his hands In the deepest of his dreams.

“I am only accepting good news,” She said as I opened the chest x-ray.

Itriied to be strong, though, Sitting up straight and interrupting me; Her voice sounded angry from time to time. As she walked out toward the door, I got up and hugged her. Tears came streaming down her face, As she apologized for being angry. And thanked me for being there.

I was not there when his heart stopped beating, I was not there when his wife cried her eyes out. I had promised I would come over, but I was not there. I had a million reasons—exams, stresses, and the rain. I tried to comfort myself. He probably didn’t even remember me; He had only seen me twice, after all. Still, I couldn’t forgive myself.

The million excuses could not mask the one big reason: Fear. I was not there—not for them, not for myself.

Beyond the layers of white walls is where the soul meets the body. Beyond the courage and bravery is the deepest fear. I know because I was there. I may not be able to bring hope, or even good news.

But I need to be there for you—even when you can’t see or hear or tell, even when you think you could take it all, even when you don’t remember me. I need to be there for you, and for myself.

Ning, a third-year M.D. student at DMS, grew up in China and started teaching herself English when she was 11 years old. She came to the U.S. in 2003 to attend Grinnell College in Iowa, where she majored in biology and almost satisfied the requirements for a major in German as well; during a semester in Berlin, she took courses (conducted in German) in biology and chemistry and did human genetics research at the Max Planck Institute.

During her first year at DMS, she spent time shadowing the chief of cardiothoracic surgery, Dr. William Nugent, also a member of Dartmouth Medicine’s Editorial Board. Nugent says that one day, Wang “appeared in my office, asking to see some surgery. Over the ensuing year, she shadowed me in the clinic, and office and in that time . . . witnessed the breadth of my practice.” At the end of the year, he continues, “I asked her . . . to write down her impressions. . . . I expected an essay—or nothing—but received instead a poem.”

In the poem, Wang wrote in the first stanza about three memorable patients she encountered: one who lay unconscious in the ICU, one who was receiving a diagnosis of cancer, and one who died. Never had Wang met him only twice. The poem’s fourth stanza, Wang says, “is my reflection on the fact that sometimes doctors are not there because they cannot face mortality . . . that being present is not just about being able to offer help or bring hope, but about being there for the patient even when they don’t seem to know you are there.”

The patient in the first stanza, she adds, “recovered fully, and he and his wife are still in touch with me.”

Funerals and Phone Calls
By Deborah A. Lindberg, B.S.N., M.B.A.

Well, yes, I am home again. I suppose. After all, the same town, same street, same driveway same house.

So why does it look so different? I feel so vast, empty. You see, the halls—their go on forever, filled with empty rooms filled with no one. Every corner leads to another endless corridor, another vacant extension. And the windows let in too much light. Can’t I close out the light, keep in the echoing darkness? But I don’t want to look out. Feel the sunshine, see the trees. Only to hide, To turn aside, To sink down into the rug and cry.

Lindberg is the nurse manager of Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center’s outpatient gastroenterology and hepatology clinic. The position involves both hands-on nursing and management; “it’s a nice Spring (continued on page 55)
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Worthy of note
continued from page 21

Generics, was recognized for his contributions to the genomics of the fungus New-
porta, in particular, his involvement in the circadian system that controls cellular behavior. And Giri Falk, Ph.D., a pro-
fessor of biology as well as the acting provost and the dean of the faculty of Dart-
mouth College, was hon-
ored for her limnological work on salmon restoration and conserva-
tion and on metal toxicity in aquatic ecosys-
tems, and also for advancing scientific edu-
cation and literacy in her role as dean of the faculty.

Gregory Holton, M.D., a professor of medicine and chair of the Department of Neurology, was named the 2009 Car-
Delight Honoree of the Epilepsy Foundation of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. He was recognized for his commitment to the epilepsy community, espe-
cially his leadership at Camp Wes Ken Tai in Massachusetts, a camp for children with epilepsy.

Deanne Compton, Ph.D., a professor of bio-
chemistry, was named editor-in-chief of the public outreach category in Cell-
dance 2009, an annual still and film image competi-
tion sponsored by the American Society for Cell Biology. The contest rec-
gnizes work that is “both scientifically important and visually engaging.” Compton’s submis-
sion was a short, humorous video titled “Down the Impact Factor Ladder.”

Thomas Colacchio, M.D., president of Dart-
mouth-Hitchcock Medical Center and a professor of surgery; and Robert Compton, M.S.N., president of Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital, were highlighted by Business NH Magazine as be-
ing among “New Hampshire's Most Power-
ful” business leaders.

Thomas Ward, M.D., a professor of neurology, was named editor-in-chief of the journal Headache Currents, which is published by the American Headache Society.

Leisa Kazi, M.D., an associate professor of community and family medicine, was elect-
ed president of the New Hampshire Acade-
my of Family Physicians.

The Dartmouth Medical School chapter of Physicians for Human Rights received Dartmouth College’s Martin Luther King Su-
cial Justice Award for a student group. The award was accepted by the leaders of the chapter, Rachelle Bannister, a fourth-year M.D. stu-
dent, and J. Alexandra Colle, a second-year M.D. student. (In addition, Dr. Peter Klimas, DMS ’90, received the College’s social justice award for lifetime achievement; he is chief of the Epidemiology Branch of the Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention at the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.)

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center received the American Stroke Association’s Get With The Guidelines Stroke Performance Achievement Award for four years in a row; the award recognizes the institution’s success at ensuring that stroke patients receive treatment according to nationally accepted standards and recom-
nendations.

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center also received the Department of Health and Human Services’ Organ Donation Medal of Honor for the fifth year in a row; the award is present-
ed by the New England Organ Bank.

Create: In our Winter 2009 issue, an article in the Vital Signs section titled “A high-tech solution to drug counterfeiting” stated that Sproxil was named Technology Pioneer for 2009 by the World Economic Forum.” It was actually the concept on which Sproxil is based that was honored; the company went 
no further.

In the Transforming Medicine section of the Winter issue, the photograph on the bot-
tom of page 50 of Joan “Posey” Fowler and
Carolyn “Kayo” Sands was incorrectly cred-
ted to Mark Washburn. The photo was tak-
ken by Jon Gilbert Frey.

And the same issue’s “Medica Mentions” section includes a photo of Dr. Robert Cantu, an assistant professor of orthopedics at DMS.

But no matter how easily the first draft of a poem flows, Lindberg revises and reworks her work numerous times. “I let it sit” for a while, she says, then “go through version af-
er version of rewriting.” There usually 
comes a time when I think I’m satisfied with it,” she adds. But even so, whenever she looks back on a poem, she “can always find something I want to change.”

Through the clouds
continued from page 47

combining,” she explains. Lindberg has been at DHMC for five years and was previ-
ously the nurse manager of the Dartmouth-
affiliated Family Medicine Institute in Aug-
gusta, Maine.

“I have enjoyed writing poetry since I was in grade school,” she says. She sometimes
writes free verse but sometimes works in more structured forms, using rhyme and me-
ter. She admits, however, that she is “not disciplined” in her writing. “Writing is a cre-
a tive outlet. It helps me tap into some of the less right-brain, type-A-personality” aspects of herself, she says.

“I . . . remember very clearly the circum-
stance that prompted me to write” the poem about her own father’s death. “It arose from an experience she had when she was living in Augusta, where she also served as a mem-
ber of the board of directors for a volunteer hospice organization.

One of her fellow board members was the pastor of a local Baptist church; when his wife died, Lindberg attended the funeral.

The church was packed, she recalls, and “the outpouring of sentiment was palpable.” Lind-
berg had only met the pastor’s wife briefly, but she said to Lindberg, “I... now I’m going to drive home with a feeling of deep loss that the woman’s husband must be feeling. And that made her realize, she says, how of often, even after a devastating loss, people
“pretend everything is just fine.”

Lindberg left the service and “drove home with a feeling of hollowness.” An image came to her of a long, empty corridor, she says, while the words of the poem “almost formed themselves in my mind without putting pen to paper.”

But no matter how easily the first draft of a poem flows, Lindberg explores and rewrites her work numerous times. “I let it sit” for a while, she says, then “go through version af-
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**Plan well.**

**Live well.**

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