

Murmurs: Stories from Our Journey in Medicine

[Episode 1: Budgeting](#)

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Podcast Transcript

Hugh Silk 0:21

Hello, and welcome to Murmurs: Stories from Our Journey in Medicine. My name is Hugh Silk and I'm a professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. This podcast series is meant to act as a reflective experience for the way health providers and those in training think about their patients in medicine. Not so much about how they make diagnoses, but more about how they relate to their patients, continue to think about them long after a visit, and what makes doctors and nurses tick. In this day and age where burnout in medicine is rapidly increasing, we can think of reflective practice as a vaccination for that burnout. But of course, this podcast should be much more than that, much in the way the world health organization does not define health merely as the absence of disease but aims for the presence of wellness. In that same vein, we hope this podcast will act not just to prevent burnout, but to celebrate what motivates physicians, nurses, students, residents, and the like. So often we hear how physicians don't like the paperwork or the systems they're in, but they love being in the room with patients. We want to celebrate those patients' stories through prose and poems written by providers and learners here at UMass and interview them to find out why they chose that topic and why they told it in the way they did. And how does writing help them to continue to care? The hope is that this podcast will inspire others to be more reflective practitioners as well. We will take turns hosting the program and interviewing learners and faculty members. So without further hesitation, let me have my co-founders introduce themselves.

Divya Bhatia 2:08

Hi, everyone, my name is Divya Bhatia, and I'm a fourth year medical student at UMass Medical School. And we also have on our team Qiuwei.

Qiuwei Yang 2:16

Hi, my name is Qiuwei Yang and I'm a third year student here at UMass.

Divya Bhatia 2:20

This podcast series is our medical school capstone project. So as Dr. Silk mentioned, we will be interviewing different members of the community on this podcast series. And today we are featuring one of our own team members who you just met, Qiuwei, and she wrote a piece that is relevant to the beginning of every physician's education.

So when did you become interested in writing?

Qiuwei Yang 2:46

I think since I was very little, I've always been interested in writing. As I grew older, school got in the way and I stopped writing as much. But in college, I became an English minor and I think that's when I started to rediscover my love of humanities. And when I came to UMass, I wanted to continue what I had been doing in college.

Divya Bhatia 3:08

That's amazing. So before we have you read your poem, I wanted to ask if without giving too much away if you could share a little bit about what motivated you to write it.

Qiuwei Yang 3:18

Yeah, of course. So I actually wrote this as a piece for the creative writing extracurricular here at UMass. And I kind of wrote this as a response to the time constraints we had in terms of the amount of information that we had to learn our first year. And the fact that we still needed to have a life and like, have friends and talk to family. And so this is kind of just almost like an accounting of all the things that I had to do first year, I felt that was necessary for me to enjoy life, and kind of like that juxtaposition.

Divya Bhatia 3:54

That's awesome. Thanks so much. Without further ado, let's have you read the poem and share with our listeners.

Qiuwei Yang 4:01

Budgeting

Total hours in a day	24
Multiply by 7	168
Hours of class a day	3-7, really fluctuates
Multiply by 7	average 18
Hours left	150

22 intrinsic muscles of the foot

The extensors and the flexors and the abductors and interossei

18 muscles of the leg

The tibialis: anterior and posterior

The fibularis: longus, brevis, tertius

Exams	5 hours, but average once every two weeks
Clinical experience	3 hours, but only once every two weeks
Extracurriculars	maybe 3? Maybe 1?
Hours left	112, seems like a lot

15 muscles of the thigh

The adductors and iliopsoas and sartorius

The quadriceps femoris, the semimembranosus, the semitendinosus, the biceps femoris  
9 muscles in the gluteal region

The gluteus, the obturators, the gemellus superior and inferior

Hours of sleep a day	7 in order to function
Multiply by 7	49
Hours left	57

7 tarsals of the foot: calcaneus, a talus, a navicular and cuboid  
3 cuneiforms, 5 metatarsals, and 14 phalanges

Hours cooking	1 hour every 3 days
Hours eating a day	1.5, but does it count if I multitask?
Multiply by 7	10.5
Hours left	43

Three major joints in the lower limb: hip, knee, ankle  
Acetabulum and femur, femur and tibia, tibia and fibula and talus  
What are the ligaments for each?

Errands	2 hours a week
Hours left	31

One external iliac that turns into the femoral that turns into the popliteal  
That splits into the anterior tibial and the posterior tibial

Long distance relationship	10 hours a week in Skype credits
Hours left	17

One lumbar plexus that forms  
The femoral, the lateral femoral cutaneous, the lumbosacral trunk  
One sacral plexus that forms  
The sciatic, the gluteals, the posterior femoral cutaneous

Being human	7 hours a week
Hours left	

Divya Bhatia 6:23

Thank you so much for reading that. One thing I'd like to bring attention to is that listeners can't see your poem. But I feel that the visual aspect, the way you wrote it is very important. Can you describe that a little bit and tell us about why you chose this format.

Qiuwei Yang 6:44

So the way I wrote it was almost like a receipt. There's two columns on the left hand side, it's kind of a list of all the things I needed to get done that day, all the things, all the responsibilities

I had that day, or that week. On the right hand side, it's basically how much time each thing took me. I actually saw a poem that had a similar structure in college. And I think that really was very present in my mind when I started writing this. Because I felt like in first year, there was a lot of times we were told, like, oh budget your time, budget your time. And you think of budgeting, you think of these lists and columns of like, Oh, this is what needs to be done. This is what, this is how much time is left. So I think that theme of hours left, I think, in structuring it that way, where I always came back to Oh, how much time do I have left?

Divya Bhatia 7:37

Yeah, in time and quantifying in numbers, those are all very prevalent in the piece. Can you share a little bit about why you chose to focus so much on numbers?

Qiuwei Yang 7:48

Yeah, of course. I think that focus on numbers was just trying to balance everything in terms of just input output. And there's really only a finite number of hours that you have in the day. So I think that this focus on numbers was just trying to cram everything that I could into the time that I had.

Divya Bhatia 8:11

And is that something that you think is new since starting medical school?

Qiuwei Yang 8:16

I think so in the sense that in college, like, you definitely had to learn time management. But I think in medical school because of the sheer volume of information that you're expected to learn and digest, and understand, I think really emphasized that, like I needed to, I needed to have kind of a schedule of what I need to do, when I need to do it, and like, how much time would it take and how much time would I have left to do other things?

Divya Bhatia 8:43

Right, and that's obviously a challenge that we're constantly facing. And another aspect I really, really liked about your poem is the fact that you chose to intersperse the various body parts and muscles throughout the poem, instead of just listing them at the beginning or the end. And it gave me a feeling of it's it's a constant presence in your life. So tell us more about that.

Qiuwei Yang 9:12

Yeah. So actually the first draft I wrote, I had all the body parts listed at the end, and then when I went to the extracurricular (kind of like a seminar), we kind of read the poem and there was actually a divide between a group of people that were like, Oh, no, you should intersperse it, and a group of people that are like, Oh, no, I like it at the end. So I think in the very beginning, I wrote it at the end, because in some ways, that was how I study: I do the things I need to do, like I need to be fed, I need to go to class and then whatever time is left, I cram for that class. And I think putting at the end, really got that message across but at the same time it I think, in the end, I feel like because we're when I'm in medicine, all of the knowledge, like the classwork is always, constantly present, as you said. So I think I chose to kind of intersperse it because

when you actually do sit down and study, it's not like you put your life you're saying on pause for ever until the very end, it's more of like, you do some things that have to do with your life. And then you aren't go full on med student for like a few hours and you like pause that and go back to that. So I think this structure of alternating between that checklist of things that you need to do in the day and in the body parts really got that idea across.

Divya Bhatia 10:40

Yeah, definitely. I mean, I think that weaving in and out is prettysynonymous with the reality that we can't always focus on just one thing at a time. We have to give our attention to multiple things at the same time. I think you conveyed that so well in this poem, and finally at the end, so the whole poem, you're quantifying, and you're tallying and you're making sure that you have enough time. But at the end, when you say hours left, your poem leaves us hanging. And there is no final tally. So was that intentional?

Qiuwei Yang 11:13

Yeah. Because, in my mind, I think that this equation changes every day and every week. So I felt kind of superficial to put an end to it and be like, oh, there's your hours left. There's one hour left. Because I think that when I live my life, like sometimes I never know if there is enough time to do all the studying or to like, go to the grocery store this week. So I kind of want to represent the fact that it's always an equation that I'm constantly balancing by leaving it blank.

Divya Bhatia 11:44

I like that, that you're constantly having to recreate the equation. That there is no one set equation, and that and I also like that it's up to you. You're the one deciding that. Thank you so much for sharing your poem with us, Qiuwei.

Qiuwei Yang 11:58

Happy to share.

Divya Bhatia 12:09

Thanks for tuning in to this episode of our podcast Murmurs: Stories from Our Journey in Medicine. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions, reach out to us via email at [murmursumassmed@gmail.com](mailto:murmursumassmed@gmail.com). This podcast was produced and edited by Divya Bhatia and Qiuwei Yang with advice from Hugh Silk. Special thanks to Jake Paulson for our original theme music and Hillary Mullan for our logo art. To learn more about medical humanities and narrative medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, visit the Humanities Lab page on the UMass Med Library website. We'll see you again soon at the next episode of Murmurs. Until then, keep reflecting and storytelling.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>