

Medicine

The Shift

A Poem from the Emergency Room

Merin Lindo*

David Geffen School of Medicine, University of California, Los Angeles, 330 De Neve Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90024, USA

*: All correspondence should be sent to: Dr. Merin Lindo

Author's Contact: Dr. Merin Lindo, M.D., E-mail: merin.lindo@ucla.edu

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15354/si.25.po011>

Funding: No funding source declared.

COI: The author declares no competing interest.

AI Declaration: The author affirms that artificial intelligence did not contribute to the process of preparing the work.

Science Insights, May 31, 2025; Vol. 46, No. 5, pp.1811-1813.

© 2025 Insights Publisher. All rights reserved.



Creative Commons Non Commercial CC BY-NC: This article is distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) which permits non-commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed by the Insights Publisher.

The morning breaks in pale white light,
Another day, another fight.
The badge goes on, the scrubs pulled tight—
A soldier in a war each night.

The door swings wide, the beepers hum,
The stretchers roll, the traumas come.
The board is full, the clock says eight—
But pain does not know time or wait.

The nurse hands off with tired eyes,
While hallway beds begin to rise.
A cough, a fall, a whispered fear—
The human tide is surging near.

“Room two is seizing—need a line!”
“Chest pain in five—just got the sign.”
“Psych consult’s waiting, patient’s loud.”
The day begins, the air feels loud.

Each step is held in borrowed pace,
Each room another sacred space.
A boy who slipped, a mother scared,
A drunk who cursed but still gets care.

A stroke rolls in with widened eyes,
And time, like breath, begins to fly.
A call to neuro, scans in hand—
This game of seconds must be planned.

A code is called. The crash cart flies.
You press the chest and hope it tries.
You call the time. You feel the weight—

A moment wrapped in silent fate.

Then turn the page, the shift rolls on,
The faces change, but not for long.
A wound to stitch, a breath to clear,
A joke to ease a patient's fear.

You ride the line of joy and ache—
Of what you give and what might break.
You hear a cry. You hear a song.
You try to choose, but both belong.

A girl who hurt in silent ways,
You kneel, you talk, you gently phrase.
You tell her this is not her shame,
That healing too can have her name.

The man in three won't meet your gaze,
He's lost in drug-fueled, shifting haze.
But still, you treat. You draw the labs.
You try to reach through all the drabs.

A paramedic's voice breaks in:
"Overdose. Naloxone. Bring her in."
You clear the room, reset your stance,
And hope this one still has a chance.

There's barely time to take a bite—
A sip of coffee, cold as night.
A paper signed, a note half-done,
Another patient—another run.

You check the labs, you scan the screen,
The data cold, the meaning keen.
You read the signs, you weigh the odds,
You play the role of fate and gods.

But still you're human, flesh and bone—
A mind that feels, a heart alone.
You think of kids you haven't seen,
Of promises that slipped between.

Yet in the chaos, quiet stays—
The moments few that somehow blaze.
A baby's laugh, a patient's hand,
A thank-you note, a brave last stand.

A veteran who nods with pride,
A woman healed, now re-supplied.
A father's tears when news is good—
These fuel you more than coffee could.

The shift wears down, your legs protest,
Your mind a fog, your soul half-dressed.
Yet still you check, you circle back,
You make sure nothing's slipped a crack.
At handoff now, the weight released—
The battle done, the storm deceased.

You trade your notes, your charts, your pain,
To someone fresh, who starts again.

And as you leave, the doors still swing,
The monitors still beep and ring.
You walk outside to morning light,
Half in a dream, half in the fight.

You gave your mind, your heart, your spine—
To patch the cracks in others' time.
And though the world may never see,
The shift you worked shaped destiny.

So, sleep in peace, oh weary one,
The war resumes with every sun.
But know this truth your hands have proved—
That hope is real, and lives are moved. ■

Received: March 01, 2025 | Revised: March 11, 2025 | Accepted: March 20, 2025
