

MIND TO MIND

Creative writing that explores the abstract side of our profession and our lives

Stephen T. Harvey, M.D., Editor

Lumbar Puncture

Nisa Malli

P Present your spine to the resident
and his audience of almost-
doctors, next year's earnest needle-
wielders, sweet-
faced believers in science, interns here
to learn the precise
point of entry for a surface
wound. Percutaneous means through
the skin but this is bone-
deep, not puncture but punch, more
pain than most of them will know
in their lives of prescriptive
call and answer. The doctors are more scared
than you. Things can happen at the blind
head of a needle, in the laying
of hands, in an open-
faced excavation. The interns race
each other to name the risks:
headaches, herniation, hematomas, tonsillar
descent. This is how they find your fused
lumbar—three tries in, the topical
worn off, the experts unsure
why you're resisting
being pinned—here is
the cause of your shallow
grand pli  , your unwillingness
to be bent like a bird's wing.

This poem is one of the finalists of ANESTHESIOLOGY's 2019 annual creative writing competition, The Letheon. malli.nisa@gmail.com.

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