

Patient sketches

NO USE FOR THIS FOOT

Alan Blum MD

■ Cite as: *CMAJ* 2018 June 25;190:E783. doi: 10.1503/cmaj.180775

“Tell me a story.” I learned the importance of listening closely to the patient from my father, who felt that to be a good doctor meant learning from patients through the stories they shared with him. As an intern at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal from 1975 to 1976, I began sketching and jotting down bits of dialogue as a way to spend more time with the patient, to focus more closely on his or her expression and to try to capture the essence of our encounter. A crucial role of the physician is to identify the patient’s fears and to try to allay anxiety. After all, we also have sat in the patient’s chair.

I have no use for this foot except to put a sock on

I have no intention of ever running a 100 yard dash



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This sketch and note date back more than four decades.

“I have no use for this foot except to put a sock on. I have no intention of ever running a 100 yard dash.” Later in the appointment, he said, “Doctor told me I needed an autopsy, but I said I wanted to wait.”

CODA

Patient sketches

ALLTHOSESYLLABLES

Alan Blum MD

■ Cite as: *CMAJ* 2018 July 16;190:E868.
doi: 10.1503/cmaj.180838

I don't see why they have to have
all those syllables
just to say one word.
I like older doctors.
They seem to talk to you more.
Just like you talkin'.
Younger doctors seem to be in such a hurry.
I had one doctor,
used to have to chase him,
grab onto his white coat.
Flittin' up and down the hall.
You want to ask him somethin'
you have to run him down.

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*This sketch and note date back more than
three decades.*



CODA

Patient sketches

SECRET OF A LONG LIFE

Alan Blum MD

■ Cite as: *CMAJ* 2018 August 20;190:E1000.
doi: 10.1503/cmaj.180973

I asked her the secret of her long life. She
thought a few seconds and then said:

I tended a cow,
and I'd be out in the open a lot.
Was name' Mollie.

She also said:

That doctor I saw
didn't know anything about polio.
Said it just weren't her generation
to know anything about it.
I can't remember that doctor's name,
as many bills as I got from her.



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Patient sketches

CHANGE OF A HEARING AID

Alan Blum MD

■ Cite as: *CMAJ* 2018 September 17;190:E1121.
doi: 10.1503/cmaj.181014

Government gave me a chance
to get a hearing aid fo' free,
but when I went to the doctor,
he say, "Well, Captain,
there's going to be a lot of things
you don't want to hear."

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CODA

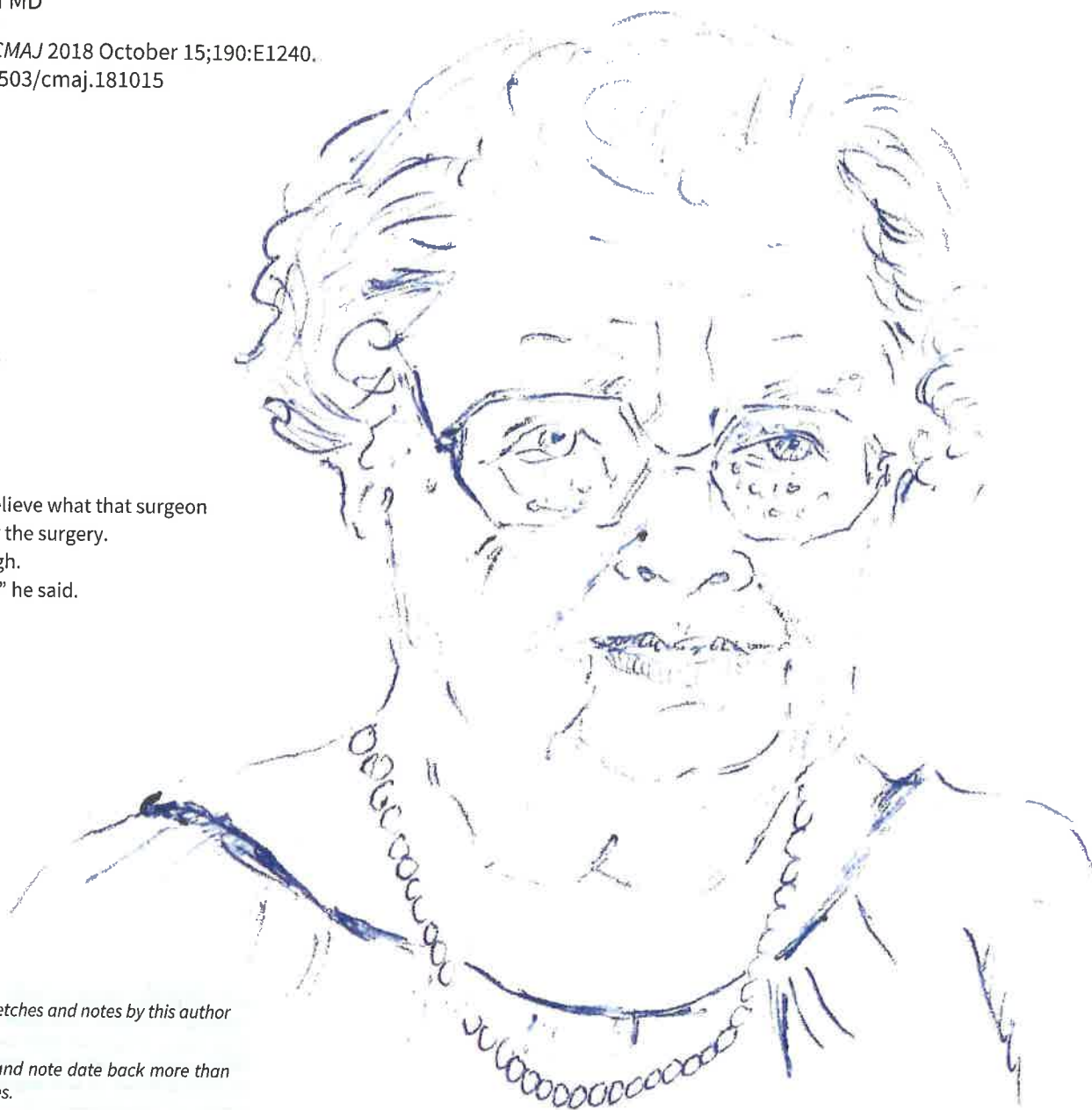
Patient sketches

WHAT THE SURGEON SAID

Alan Blum MD

■ Cite as: *CMAJ* 2018 October 15;190:E1240.
doi: 10.1503/cmaj.181015

You won't believe what that surgeon
told me after the surgery.
I have to laugh.
"I enjoyed it," he said.



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three decades.

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Patient sketches

“SAME QUESTIONS”

Alan Blum MD

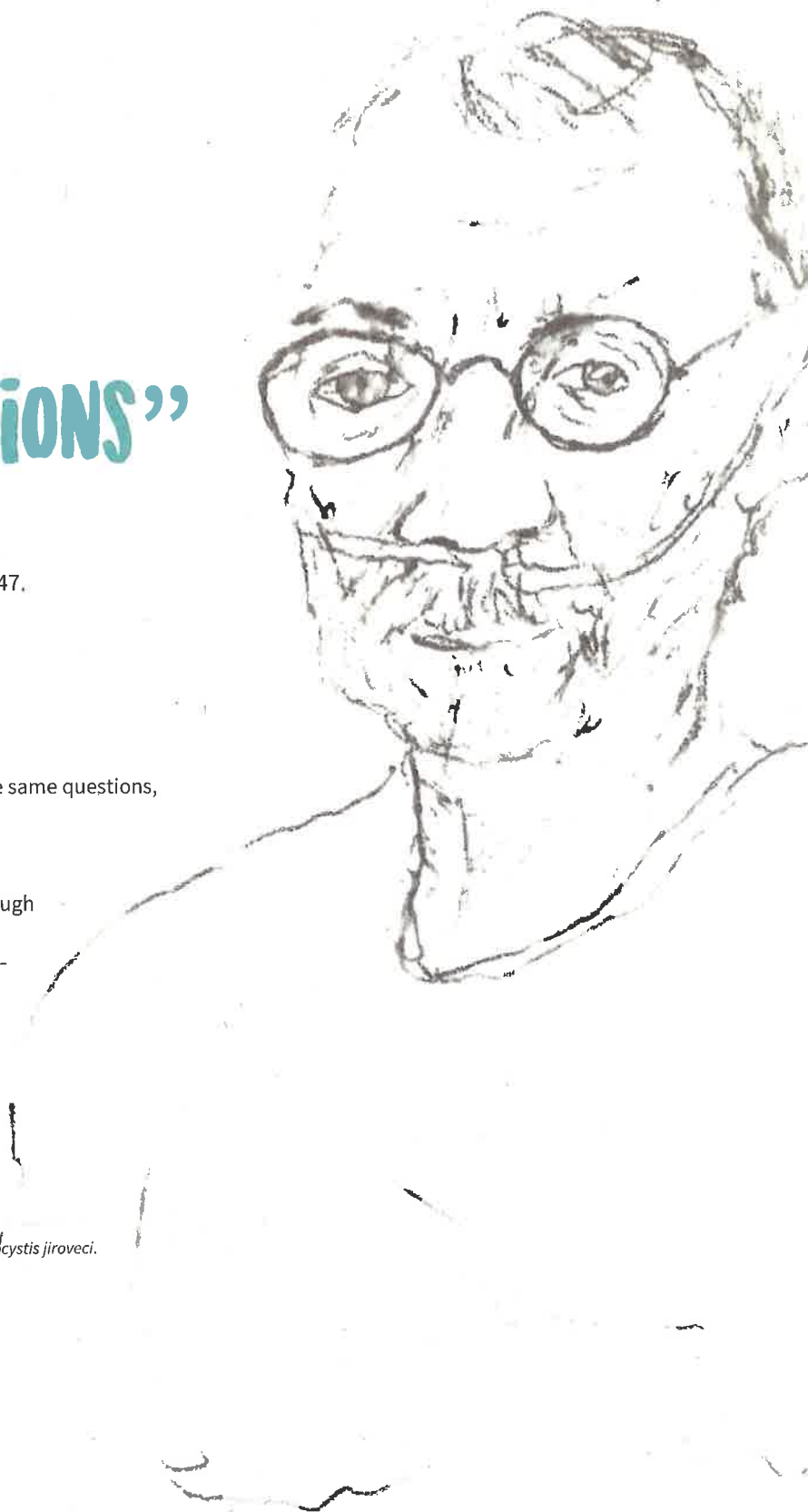
■ Cite as: *CMAJ* 2018 November 12;190:E1347.
doi: 10.1503/cmaj.181016

And all these doctors coming over to ask me the same questions,
but always just a little bit different.
I still don't know which one is my doctor.
He's a young fella, you know, roundy face,
the one who told me my oxygen wasn't low enough
to come in the hospital.
But then when one of the big doctors came by —
the doctor with more years of experience —
and he saw me so short of breath, and said,
“Yes, but when it's PCP ...”
and he thought a minute and asked,
“Say, did you have that oxygen tube on
when they took that blood from your wrist?”
I think I had.
“Admit him!”

PCP: *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia, since renamed *Pneumocystis jiroveci*.

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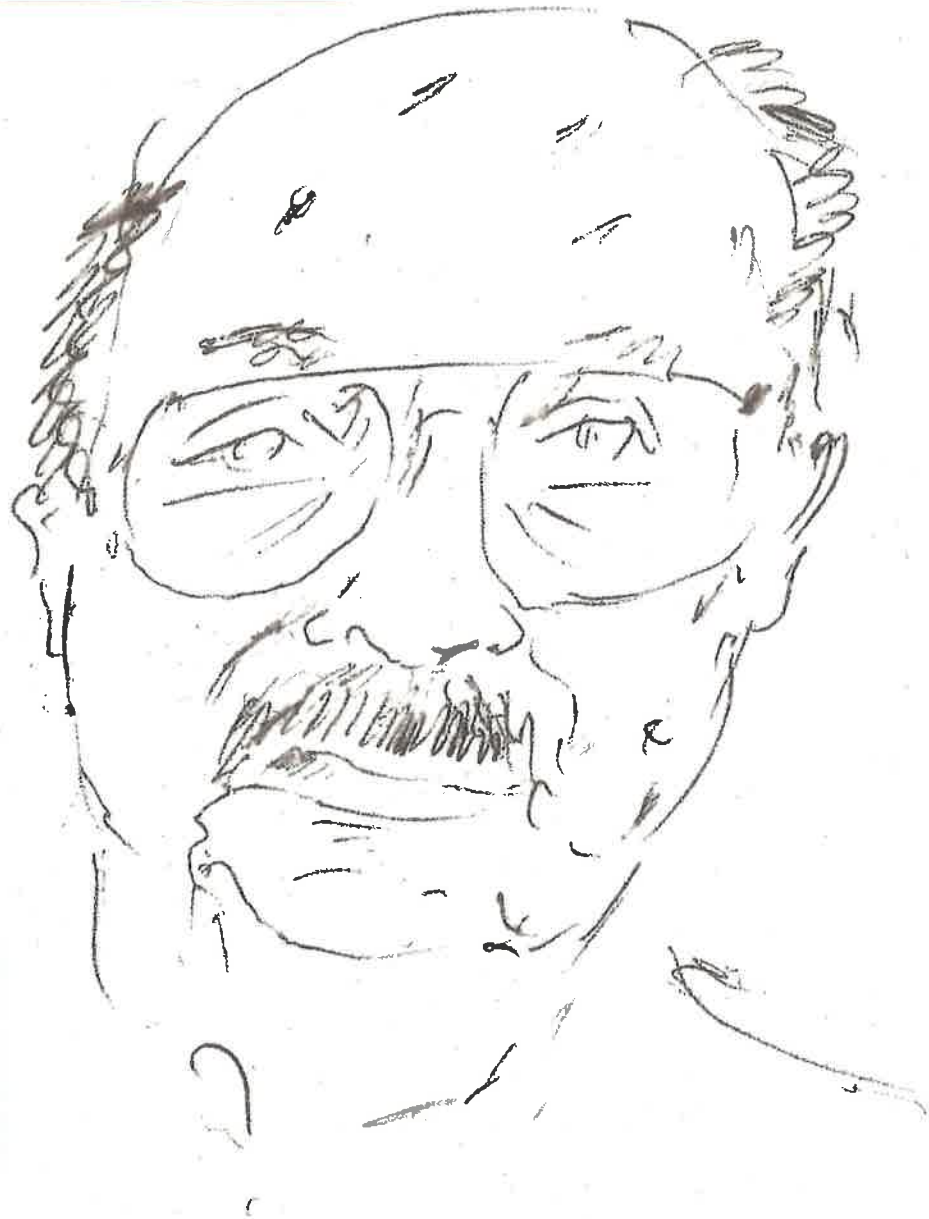
PATIENT SKETCHES

DOG HOSPITAL

Alan Blum MD

■ Cite as: *CMAJ* 2018 December 10;190:E1465. doi: 10.1503/cmaj.181490

"I'm waitin' for this new medicine
they tried on a dog with rheumatism.
Some kinda new kinda salve.
Got rid of his rheumatism.
I seen a dog hospital on TV.
I can't believe so much money they invest
in dog hospitals.
All the laboratories,
all the equipment.
Better than people."



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three decades.

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PATIENT SKETCHES

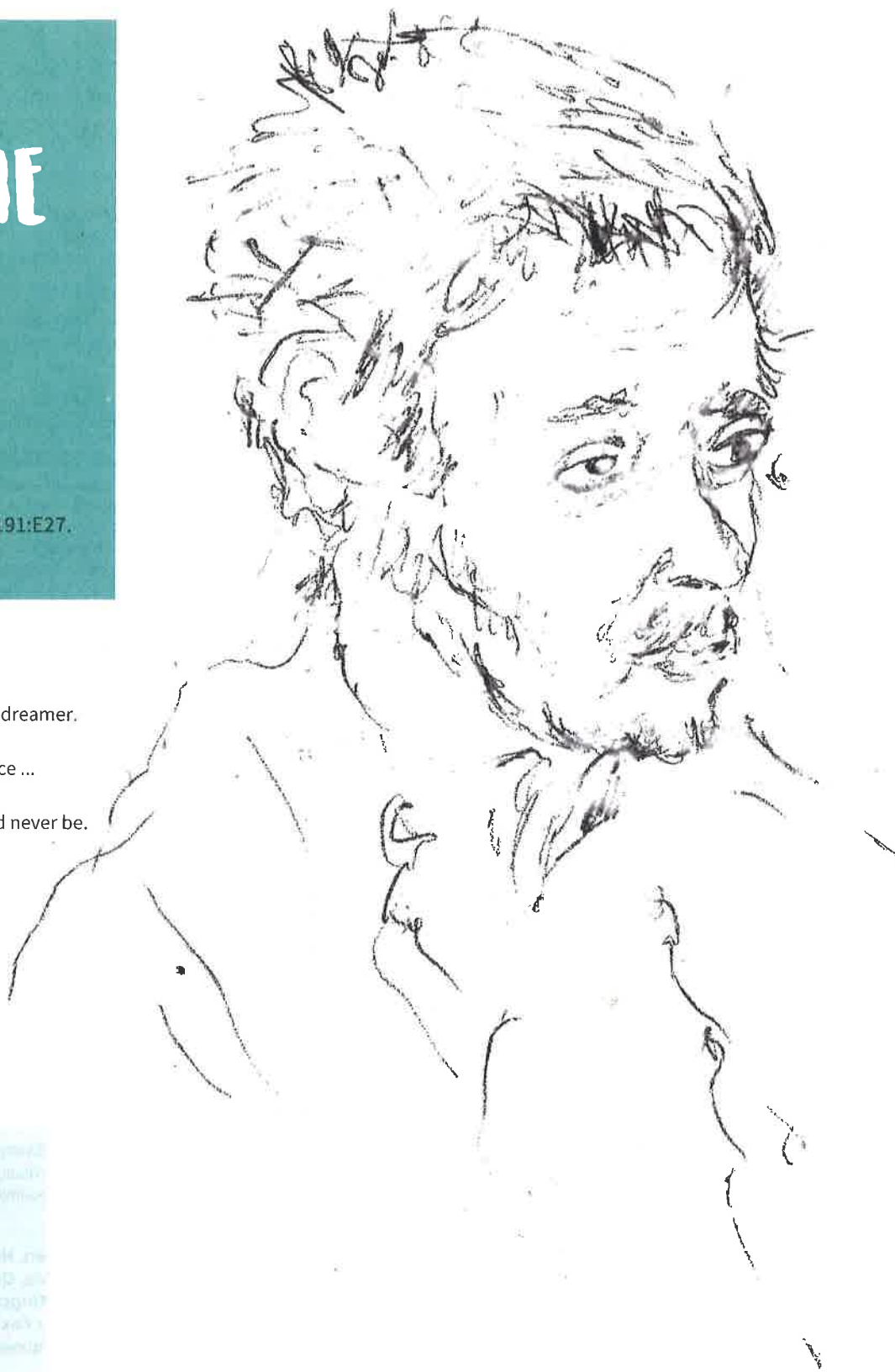
TURNED ME INTO A DREAMER

Alan Blum MD

■ Cite as: *CMAJ* 2019 January 7;191:E27.
doi: 10.1503/cmaj.181491

“My father’s death turned me into a dreamer. He was a marine biologist, and he took me deep-sea fishing once ...

The death of someone I knew I could never be. It left a lot of dreams running in my head.”



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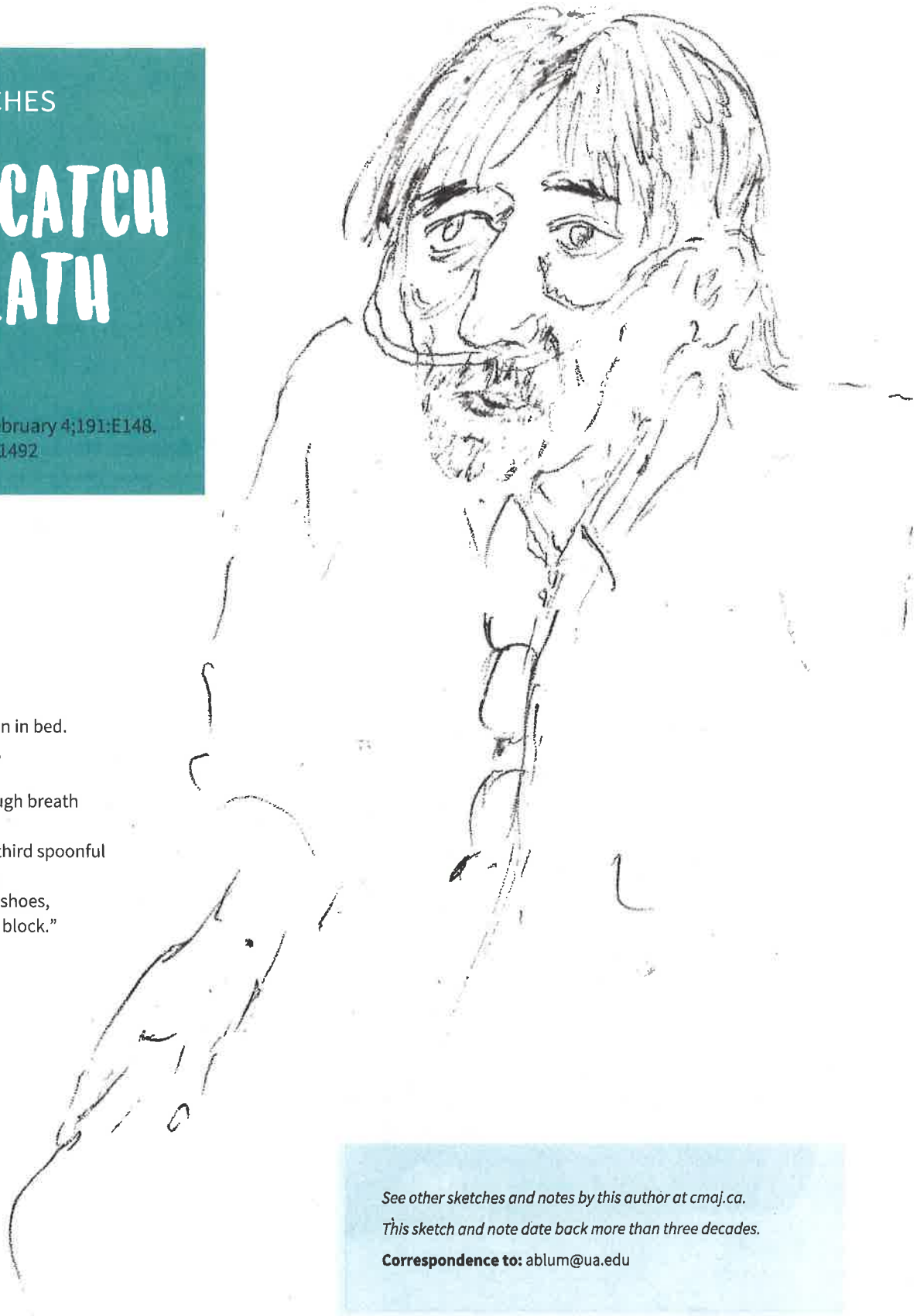
PATIENT SKETCHES

CAN'T CATCH MY BREATH

Alan Blum MD

■ Cite as: *CMAJ* 2019 February 4;191:E148.
doi: 10.1503/cmaj.181492

"I run out of breath
from changing my position in bed.
Here it is I'm trying to eat,
I can't catch my breath.
Only way I can catch enough breath
is if I sit in this spot.
Reason I haven't taken a third spoonful
is I can't catch my breath
Give me a pair of running shoes,
and I'll go run around the block."



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PATIENT SKETCHES

WORRIED MYSELF TO DEATH ALL MY LIFE

Alan Blum MD

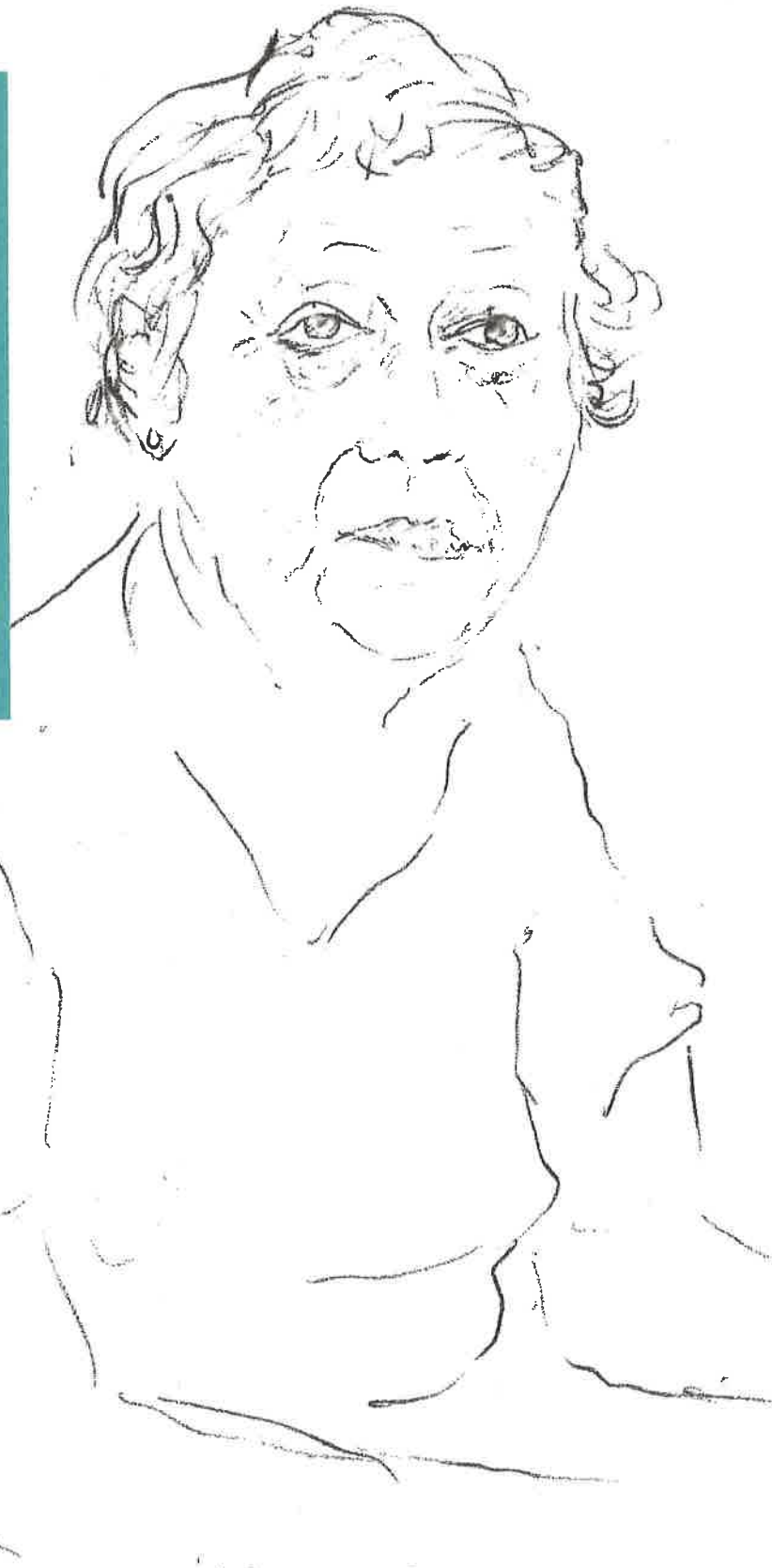
■ Cite as: *CMAJ* 2019 March 4;191:E271.
doi: 10.1503/cmaj.181493

"I am older than I should be,
'cause I worried myself to death all my life.
I don't like gray hair.
I want some kind of happiness,
and I'm not gettin' it."

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at cmaj.ca.*

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PATIENT SKETCHES

COULDN'T MISS ME

Alan Blum MD

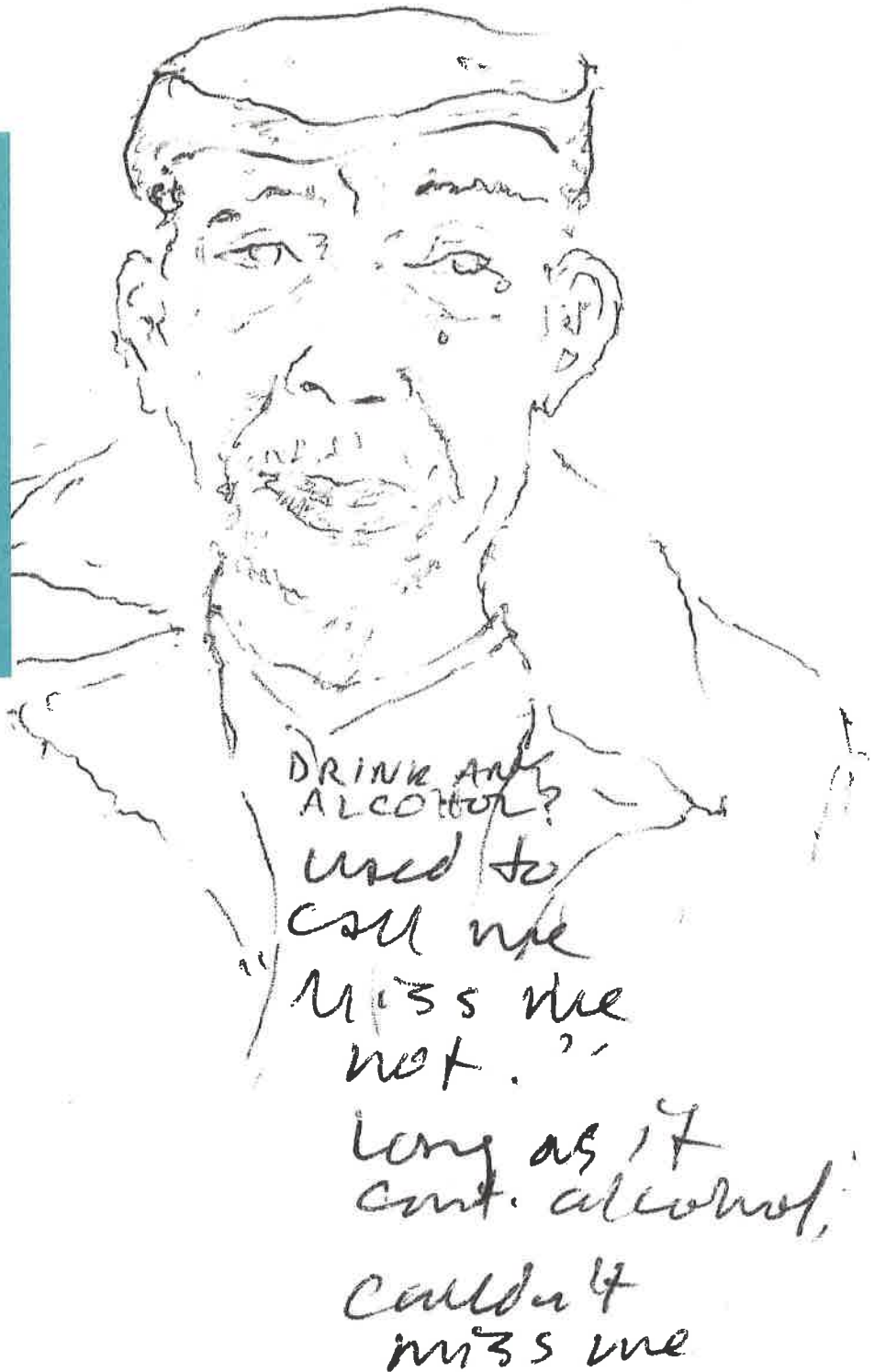
■ Cite as: *CMAJ* 2019 April 1;191:E379.
doi: 10.1503/cmaj.181494

Doctor: "Drink any alcohol?"
Patient: "Used to call me 'Miss me not.'
Long as it contained alcohol,
couldn't miss me."

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PATIENT SKETCHES

AIN'T MUCH FUN

Alan Blum MD

■ Cite as: *CMAJ* 2019 May 6;191:E516.
doi: 10.1503/cmaj.181495

It ain't much fun to go to Weight Watchers
an' get up on that scale
and see that you have paid
to gain weight.

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PATIENT SKETCHES

HOMELESS

Alan Blum MD

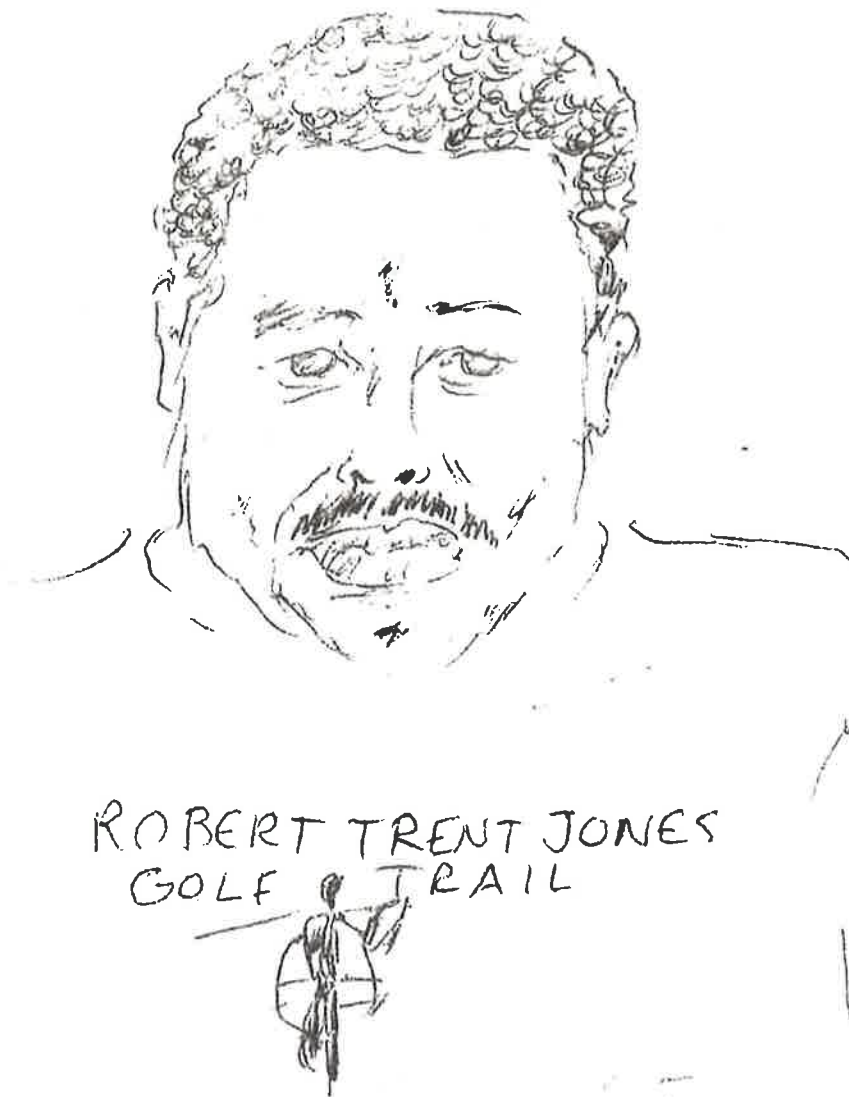
■ Cite as: *CMAJ* 2019 June 3;191:E624.
doi: 10.1503/cmaj.190403

I guess you could call it machinist
till I got laid off.
I'm in the homeless field.
It's a lot harder job than what I was doin' before.
So I'm a "golf pro" now.

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PATIENT SKETCHES

“NEW ME”

Alan Blum MD

■ Cite as: *CMAJ* 2019 July 2;191:E751.
doi: 10.1503/cmaj.190404

I don't like going to the doctor.
I don't like taking medicine —
and I resent them.
Nowadays you feel more like furniture
coming in to be repaired.
A doctor's a very important part of your life,
your doctor is.
Something's wrong.
I'm out of whack.
I don't want to hurt his feelings,
but really,
he didn't do anything for me.
I just don't want to be an invalid.
I don't want to have a stroke.
I want to die fast.
I resent not being perfect.
I thought everyone else got old,
and I would stay young.
I think what I need is a new me.

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