

A surgeon's paintbrush Le pinceau du chirurgien

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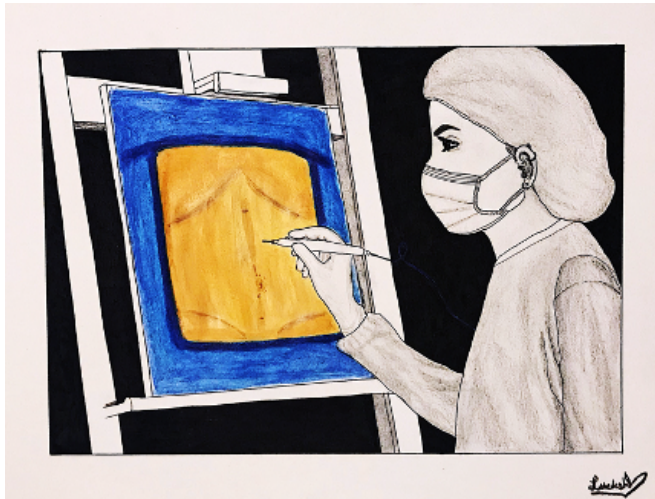
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There is an unspoken art to medicine and surgery. Over the course of medical training, the emphasis is often placed on acquiring scientific knowledge to become a medical expert. This helps to meet standardized exam requirements and clinical competencies, with the expected objective of producing competent and safe physicians. However, much of medicine relies on the humanistic side of the profession. It is the ability to “relieve suffering and heal the sick” that defines the purpose of medicine. The last few years of my training as a surgical resident has consolidated this – every patient’s joy, sorrow, and frustration are the artistic fuel for our determination to succeed.

Often times, medicine involves framing the clinical context of a patient encounter. It requires having the tough conversations: the best-case, worst-case scenario discussions. It involves empathy: listening to a patient’s narrative and understanding their wishes and beliefs. It is the art of the conversation, and the art of timing within the decision-making process. It is knowing when to intervene, and when to let go. It is the art of trust of the patient under your hands, as you wield the scalpel and do the final time out before first skin incision. It is also in the art of creativity and innovation, in a relentless pursuit for solutions. Holistically, much of medicine is an art, and we as physicians and surgeons are the artists holding the brush and canvas.