



Per Os (by mouth)

The fork trembles as if moved by some unseen force
oscillating with increasing intensity
as portions of pancake and fried egg fly off into space,
missing their intended destination.

Eyes opened wide with frustration
show the distress of lost skills acquired long ago,
now relegating their owner to sitting in anticipation.

Bending to this need I pick up a spoon
perhaps the more useful implement in directing transit of the desired pabulum
and begin.

Reminded of feeding my own offspring in decades past
a familiar process of scooping and aiming to the target,
their response triggering my hand to repeat this cycle again and again.

Lips open and tongue extends like an eager nestling
to receive sustenance
with gratitude, with necessity
and the expectation of completing our task together.

This we must all engage in with intention and regularity
cloaking animal need in the finery of linen and silver
separating us from this primal instinct of snarling gnashing teeth
with only a thin veneer.

There is humanity in feeding one another
the gift returned to the elder
from those to whom he has provided the same
without the thought that he might return
to this place once again.

David True, MD, PhD

Dr. True (AQA, University of California, Irvine, 1990) is a Primary Care Internist at Pacific Medical Centers in Seattle, WA; and Associate Professor and Clinical Teaching Faculty in the Department of Medicine at the University of Washington.
Illustration by Erica Aitken.