

PET scan

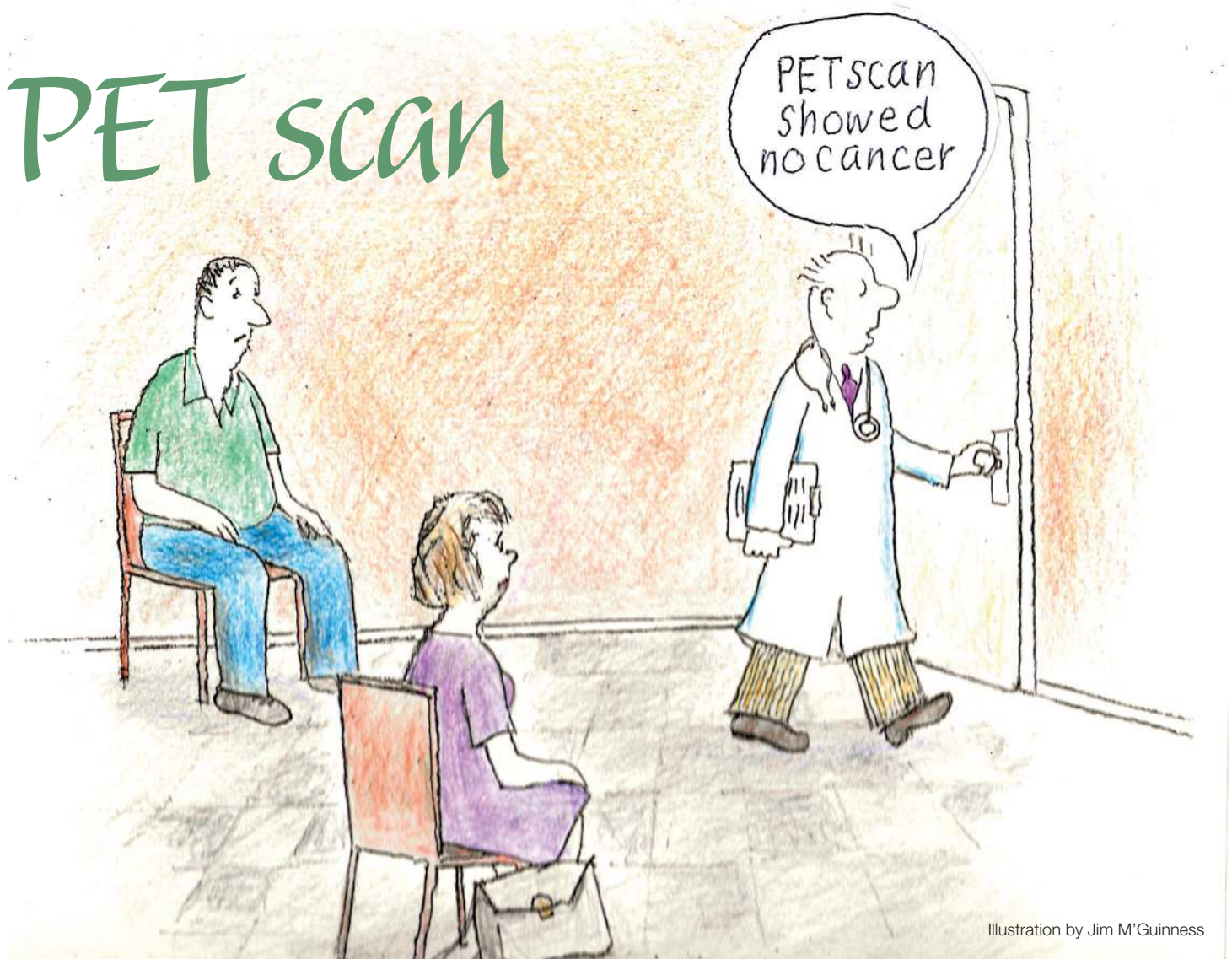


Illustration by Jim M'Guinness

We wait in the office
beige walls the color of my grandma's support stockings,
and I swear
the floors are those old tiles with asbestos that
surfaced the ground of my elementary school.
There is no way for the past
to not intrude.
The staff has the two patient chairs positioned
not close to each other which makes
the room feel even colder,
more separate, each of us alone.
We don't dare to move them.

He walks in as if his feet
do not touch the ground.
His mind not connected to the terrain he has been
enlisted to help others navigate. Yet
here he is accepting this as his occupation, mission?
He asks us why we are there?
How could this be? How could he
not know?
He who ordered the tests.
When we reply he jumps up to close the door
while saying in midstep
"pet scan showed no cancer."

Does he not know these are words
he should tell us with the gentleness you would
hold a newly hatched baby bird
vulnerable and exposed?
It is not
oh pick a few zucchinis up at the store as you
call over your shoulder while walking to your car.
It's about cancer.
It's about life or the possibility of
death.

We have held our breath
all week to hear these words.
I do not understand this
way of discounting the depths of heart.
I do not understand what has
or is happening anymore.
We leave the office
with the expectations of
celebration, relief.
Until a quarter of a year later when
we get to do this all over again.

—Debra Kiva