

Third year medical student encounter

Here comes a thorough review of all systems,
It's a rather long list of the usual questions,
To which you should answer: yes, no, or maybe.
And please, sir, don't think that I'm utterly crazy
For asking you whether you tingle or twitch
When what you are here for is simply an itch.

We'll start from the top, from your head to your toes,
And, oh, not to worry, we'll get to your nose.
But first tell me this: do you smoke cigarettes?
Have you had any fever, chills or night sweats?
Very good, that all sounds more than okay,
Now, sir, have you had any chest pain today?

Any problem with feeling you can't catch your breath?
Family history of sudden or unexplained death?
Yes, I know that these queries seem somewhat erratic,
But I promise I'm not being melodramatic.
Now let me inquire about pain in your tummy,
Does it ever feel even a little bit crummy?

Continuing downward, this is awkward, I know,
But it's crucial to ask how it is when you go,
To the bathroom, that is, when you poop and you pee,
Have you noticed—well—is there blood you can see?
No? Great. We are almost done with the list,
Any surgeries? Even for a sebaceous cyst?

So now we've completed the record of those,
(And I promise I will take a look at your nose)
But first I'm afraid you may tell me to scram,
Because I must do a full physical exam.
Yes, I know it may seem a little bit much,
But I'm a student, remember, so I have a soft touch.

Let me get from my pocket my optical light,
To shine in your eyes—yes, it's a little bit bright.
Next open your mouth and say "ah" if you're able,
Great. Now please, if you could lie down on the table.
We're really almost done, please don't think I'm a nut,
As I listen to your heart and your lungs and your gut.

Everything sounds clear, and you don't have a murmur,
No call to do tests or anything further.
Thank you so much, sir, let me say you were great,
I'm sure you're relieved that we won't keep you late.
I'll just check very quickly with Dr. Butray,
To see if I can give you some—well—just nasal spray.

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Ms. Martin is a member of the Class of 2014 at University of Washington School of Medicine. This poem won honorable mention in the 2014 *Pharos* Student Poetry Competition. Ms. Martin's e-mail address is: glennacm@gmail.com. Illustration by Jim M'Guinness.

