

Hazel Eyes

Angela Guzmán

Beautiful hazel eyes greeted me as I entered the room. I shall never forget them. They belonged to a woman whose beauty was profound. She was an avid runner and a powerful kick boxer. These eyes belonged to a woman full of life, and stage four colon cancer. Prior to entering the room I reviewed her chart. I read her story, and yet, her fragility was not immediately a reality for me. Perhaps it was because she called this a minor setback in her life. Or, could it be that her radiant smile overshadowed her current trials? I am certain that it was our seemingly endless conversation about the fullness of her life that made me lose track of time. Our conversation ended abruptly by the entrance of my attending, and my report was severely lacking. I was not brave enough to tell him that we conversed about everything other than the reason why she was here today. In this moment of inadequacy I smiled because this conversation with my patient was worth more to me than my ability to recall her prescription history.

The gravity of my patient's situation had not hit me until my attending enlightened me with the truth. Her prognosis was slim, and God only knows how long she has to live. I felt as though the life had been sucked out of me the moment I was conscious of her situation. Sadly, this shouldn't have come as a surprise. Nonetheless, I was speechless and fought back the tears swelling in my eyes. While my attending offered me constructive criticism about my lackluster performance, my mind drifted back to those hazel eyes belonging to a woman who was turning 55. We jokingly discussed how she would get a Pap smear to celebrate the occasion. How did I miss this prognosis?

She was not a diagnosis, she was not a woman dying from disease, she is a woman making the most of life, and I will never forget her.



Watercolor Eye-Age 25
Jodi Slade

■ **Jodi Slade** is the medical illustrator, animator, and artist for the FSU College of Medicine. She is an alumna of FSU and the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, where she studied medical illustration until 2011. Jodi came onto the HEAL team in 2012. Jodi has a passion for 3D sculpture, watercolor, and animation, and has been known to watch her fair share of cartoons. Her greatest loves are Disney, football (go Baltimore Ravens), and her husband, Jesse.

Looking back I am confident that I bypassed her history because she chose to focus on the present. We laughed and conversed about jovial things instead of dwelling on the challenges of the past. I suppose time passes quickly when you're lost in good conversation. Although I apologized for my poor report, I do not regret the time spent simply talking to my patient. She was not a diagnosis, she was not a woman dying from disease, she is a woman making the most of life, and I will never forget her. Subsequently, I now realize that there is an invisible emotional barrier present when you are studying diseases in a book because we are estranged from the gravity of its destruction. Today I was reminded that diseases are not inseparable from people. As physicians we are called to manage and treat disease. More importantly we are called to care for the person living with the disease.

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