

There was a young surgeon who swallowed a flea

Nicholas M. Boulis

I am an old lady who swallowed a fly.
I don't know why I swallowed the fly,
I guess I'll die.

I went to the ER to take out the pest.
With curtains half-drawn, I took off my dress.
The emergency doctor consulted a flea,
For abdominal pain he palpated me.
With EKGs running and blood work sent off,
The internist turned to his student to scoff.
The ER's so stupid. They haven't a clue.
Is there anyone here who knows what to do?
My exam is conclusive; it's clear that she's got
A GI obstruction; her gut's in a knot.

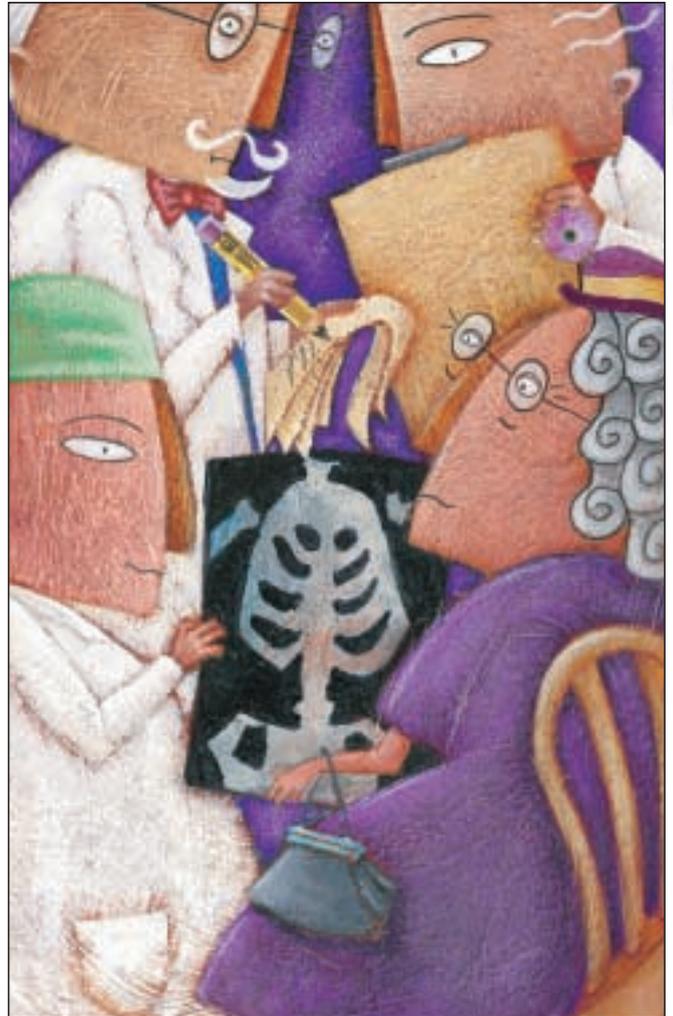
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They sent me to x-ray, to peek at my bowels
With an overpriced gizmo whose name had no vowels.
I waited down there on a cart in the hall,
And then in a room with some lead in the wall.

When the doctor came in, he scowled at the chart:
"Straight to the scanner, no plain films to start?
Will you look at this note, three pages in length.
One line is enough, if you write it with strength.
Internists are wordy; they're sophists by trade.
I've got no idea how they ever get paid."
With the flip of a switch on a digitized screen:
"I see no obstruction, the swelling's her spleen."

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And down came the surgeons with blood on their gowns
With scrub hats and masks to conceal their dark frowns.
"Radiologists think with scanners and such
With no clinical savvy, the film is a crutch.



Graham Ross

We'll take her upstairs, to excise and explore,
Abstract cogitation is what we deplore.
The adage is true, if they want us to heal
This lady's in need of some well-sharpened steel."
But once in my belly no path could be seen
So they took out my appy, to prove it was clean.

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There was a young surgeon

With scrub hats and masks to conceal their dark frowns.
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Then back in the ER they left me to think
For the surgeons had said I needed a shrink.
But when he arrived in his glasses and sweater,
The look on his face proved his mood was no better.
"Doze crazy clinicians, dey tink vit de phallus.
You've entered a hole like dat little girl Alice.
Delusions you've got vit a touch of depression;
Call me next time to avoid their aggression.
Terapy sessions will lighten your load;
Your cure is in sight, Prozac à la mode."

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Today I feel better, no bugs in my soup.
Delivered from hell and that quarrelsome group
To think they began in the very same school
Of premeds selected from applicant pools
Maintaining the goal of the patient to heal.
It seems something's lost in their clinical zeal.
Trainings divergent can narrow perspective,
Destroying a teamwork approach that's collective.
My plea to you all, and my final position:
Respect for one's colleagues makes better physicians.

Dr. Boulis is with the Department of Neurosurgery, Cleveland Clinic Foundation, Cleveland, Ohio.

Home Remedies

Warts and urine

A young woman painted her plantar warts with her own urine, having learned this treatment from her mother and her grandmother, who both came from Eastern Europe. She came to ask me about an alternative treatment after the urine remedy proved ineffective. — *Dr. Ruth Elwood Martin, Vancouver*

Home Remedies

A cure worse than the disease

This home remedy for cankers isn't very amusing, particularly for the patient, but it does seem to work. Moisten the tip of a spoon and dip the spoon into alum powder, which is available at most grocery stores and is usually used to make pickles crunchy. Press the spoon tip against the ulcerated area and hold the alum in place as long as possible. If you watch yourself in the mirror you'll turn quite red and your eyes will water profusely. Rinse out your mouth, wipe away your tears and repeat as often as needed until the ulcer is gone — 2 applications usually does the trick. OUCH! — *Jane Mettham, RN, London, Ont.*