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The online version of this paper has been corrected in deviation from print and in accordance with this correction.

doi: 10.1192/bjp.197.3.247b

poems  
by  
doctors

## Looking Down

Roy Salole

They walk into the restaurant,  
as if a cloud was over them,  
head bowed and looking down  
father, mother, and two girls.  
The first, 10 years old, is slim and bright.  
The other, older, bigger, with tongue  
protruding, her Mongolian features  
signaling immediately: "Down's!"

Father shepherds the girl to sit  
with her back to the crowd.  
Daughter looks up to dad  
watching intently for secret signals,  
And when she speaks too loud  
he holds his hand up  
and she stops, well trained;  
but her sister, embarrassed, looks down,  
and her mother, embarrassed, looks down,  
and I, embarrassed, look down.

And,  
looking down,  
I want to say:  
"I know how painful it must be."  
I want to say:  
"I do imagine it to be unbearable."

I want to say:  
"I remember, oh yes  
I now remember the day,  
so long ago  
when my friend's child was born  
into my hands and I looked down  
and saw those same Mongolian features."

I want to say:  
"I remember then,  
scared and stunned,  
I looked away."  
I want to say,  
"I remember then  
my friends too, looked away."

I want to say:  
"I remember then,  
the pain was so unbearable  
that we had to look away in denial  
not facing what we saw,  
for a time,  
until we could look up and deal with the pain."

And when I look up again,  
I want to say:  
"I weep today in sorrow  
for your loss and that of my friend's  
and I also weep today in gratitude  
for the miraculous gift  
of my five sons."

Another of Roy's poems was published in the December 2009 issue of the *Journal*.

The British Journal of Psychiatry (2010)  
197, 248. doi: 10.1192/bjp.197.3.248