

Elegy for a Doctor With Double Vision

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He battled the scars of myelin
in himself and in others,
the bright tracers of active attack
seen on the MRI, and the craters
where axons vanished; the dull color
replacing red, the unclear vision, double vision,
what his eyes told his brain and what
his patients told him, trying to follow
his moving finger,
trying to balance.

He guided his patients on difficult slopes
of relapses and remissions, through thickets
of white matter where their own T cells
crept in ambush, self against self.
He guided his patients among the drugs;
such a bewildering throng to keep
T cells, B cells, antibodies,
caught in the errors of their ways,
from savage forays. So his patients
chose the punctures or the pills
as he himself had made his choices,
living with MS and for
those others living with it.

The cause of MS, like so much that turns
our bodies against us, isn't known.
There's recent evidence a virus

almost all have had, called Epstein-Barr,
triggers it. I don't know if he believed that,
but it was a newer virus, one
whose cause we also do not fully know,
although it killed 5 million in 3 years
since it took on our species, that, despite vaccines,
found his immune defenses could not hold.

Another specialist will take over his clinic
but his patients will miss the doctor
whose double vision helped him see them
truly, as he cared for them.

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