LETTER TO THE EDITOR

RE: A last poem from Susan. Pain Res Manage 2012;17:9

To the Editor:

I just read 'A last poem from Susan' (Pain Res Manage 2012;17:9). I was moved to find something that really touched me in the *Pain Research & Management Journal*. Mostly, the articles leave me without any emotion.

I do believe some sufferings are beyond our understanding – but not totally. I don't think we either do or don't understand. Hence, anything that increases understanding of and empathy for those suffering from persistent pain, even if their experience cannot be fully understood (and I also think it cannot), is welcome.

I am the author of *Inside Chronic Pain: An Intimate and Critical Account* (Cornell University Press, 2009), essentially a memoir of living with severe daily pain for some 12 years, and also a critical analysis of the medical system from the perspective of my actual experiences with it.

The poem is so important to me, as I am writing a follow-up book in which I am noting the need to engage different ways of

knowing (such as art, poetry, photography, documentaries, etc) if we are going to understand the lived experience of chronic pain in greater depth, which is necessary for real change to occur. Mainstream research won't accomplish that. So I was happy to read the poem and plan to use it. It is beautiful. I am left with the impression that Susan might have ended her life over her pain. Perhaps I am projecting, having been at that threshold in the past many times myself.

Regarding the art of painting in relation to chronic pain, the Pain Exhibit is a striking collection of paintings by artists who live with pain but also by those who have never painted before. It is really worth seeing if you are not familiar with it (www.painexhibit.com).

Again, I am happy to find something reflecting real life in a research journal. Thank you again.

Sincerely,
Lous Heshusius
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