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### Early Morning Clinical Rounds

Amy M. Haddad  
*Creighton University*

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## Early Morning Clinical Rounds

Cover Page Footnote

Not applicable

## Early Morning Clinical Rounds

### Room 312 -

The medical team takes their places  
by the bed. The attending physician  
calls the steps, the conventions  
simply known. Honor your attending,  
the team bows, honor your corner.  
The chief resident does the work-up,  
knows which way to turn, three hands  
around and swing. The first year  
residents show-off their moves,  
allemande left circling through  
lab work, scans, and plans.  
The medical students watch  
from the sides, shadow the routine,  
mouthing the count a few beats  
behind. The attending promenades  
down the hall, residents and students  
follow to the next room and take  
up their positions.

### Room 314 -

Exam lights streak a landing strip  
the length of the bed.  
A nurse in isolation gear bumps  
the door with her butt,  
backs into the room on tiptoe  
to shut off the insistent alarm  
calling her to rearrange the tangle  
of lines and bags. The patient, hidden  
by linens, lies slantwise. He lifts his head  
at the silence, squints to make out  
who is there behind the mask  
then falls back, raising one thin arm  
to shield his eyes from the glare.

Room 316 -

The smell hits the nurse before she gets  
the computer cart through the door  
The patient moans a tearful apology  
*Shit.* Now she will be late passing meds.  
Trying to be kind, she soothes  
and moves soft-shoed to locate  
the call light for lifting help.  
There is nothing to do but wait.  
She shifts her weight between her feet,  
pats the patient's hand in counterpoint.  
Impatience sways her side to side.  
She breathes through her mouth,  
trying not to gag.

South Wing Rooms -

In every room, the patients sit  
propped up with pillows in giant recliners.  
They are puppets whose strings  
have been cut. The tech knocks  
on each door, not expecting  
or getting a reply. He puts the trays  
on the overbed stands.  
*Here's your breakfast.*  
Pulls the covers off the eggs and toast  
and sashays out. No one there  
to help unwrap the silverware  
salt the eggs or open the juice.  
Later, the tech taps back  
to pick up the untouched trays.