

# Author in the Room

An initiative to translate research into practice from *JAMA* and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement.

## Screening for Colon Cancer

William Taylor, MD

April 19, 2006  
2 to 3 PM EST

Discuss the clinical implications of research results with the author at the next teleconference.

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### Charity Hospital, New Orleans

1735-2005

Generations climbed her stone steps,  
disappeared for years inside gray walls,  
learned to live thirty-six-hour days  
and then to sleep without dreams.  
We passed through admit rooms,  
studied gunshot wounds and abdominal pain,  
absorbed impermanence and accepted death.  
We walked the deep night wards,  
silent save for an occasional moan,  
listened for the absence of breath.  
We emerged changed—  
not more compassionate perhaps,  
but calmer, sadder, more resigned.  
From those years much was lost,  
lives and stories forever gone.  
Our hands remember though  
how to wield a knife,  
separate good tissue from bad,  
preserve vessel and nerve  
and something more—  
how to touch a dying patient  
whisper a wordless benediction  
and receive a blessing in return.

Wayne F. Larrabee, Jr, MD  
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Poetry and Medicine Section Editor: Charlene Breedlove, Associate Editor. Poems may be submitted to [jamapoems@jama-archives.org](mailto:jamapoems@jama-archives.org).

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