

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dr. Wolff is a board-certified family physician in private practice in Cornelius, North Carolina. He finished his family practice residency in 1997. He has graciously consented to share stories from the trenches of primary care. While his practice diary is taken from actual patient encounters, the reader should be aware that some medication references may represent off-label uses. Identifying details have been changed to protect patient confidentiality.

We at the *Companion* are certain that these vignettes will inform, entertain, challenge, and stimulate our readers in their effort to address behavioral issues in the everyday practice of medicine.

## Sigh

Christian G. Wolff, M.D.

### Monday

TD is a 55-year-old fellow who is 3 years into a slowly progressing divorce. To summarize, 4 years ago his wife started to act “weird” and spend numerous weekends away with “the girlfriends.” Later, he discovered that the girlfriend’s name was Herman and that Herman had a nice getaway in Myrtle Beach.

After months of counseling, TD is now dating again and is, in fact, effusive about his current gal pal. Off all medications, he reports that he is feeling fantastic and “taking care of himself.” In that vein, he asks about hormone testing. Apparently, for the first time ever, his “maleness” is not responding, in spite of borrowing “a buddy’s” sildenafil. This malfunction never happened with his former wife. After a few minutes of explaining to him that a significant amount of sex is supratentorial and that he may just be anxious, he breaks down in tears. “I wonder if my ex and I could make another go at it?”

I have held TD’s hand through his agony as he traversed Kübler-Ross’ stages of grief—denial, anger, bargaining, and depression, just to find him back at denial once again.

### Tuesday

Remember the elderly woman who came to thank me for “fixing her” and making her feel “calmer, happier, and more focused” than she thought possible after I placed her on quetiapine? She returned today in her old, grumpy, depressed form. What happened? This octogenarian gained 10 pounds and was distressed that she didn’t look good in her evening gowns, so she abruptly stopped taking her medication. Really.

### Wednesday

BG is a 17-year-old who had been sighing excessively for 5 days. An otherwise healthy young man, he is a star first baseman on his high school squad. After an exhausting examination including an x-ray and a nebulizer treatment with no clear diagnosis, his mother reveals the answer with a eureka moment: “Susan is messing with your head, isn’t she?”

BG turns red in the face. Stops sighing. I got a call from mom today. It’s been a week. New girl. No more sighing.

### Thursday

You’ve got to love generic price wars! YD is a sophomore collegian who came to see me because her premenstrual dysphoria was out of control and she was alienating friends because of it. We have been successfully treating her with fluoxetine at 80 mg dosed once 1 week prior to menses. Since her medical insurance is for catastrophic coverage only, the price is right—6 months of therapy costs \$5 at the local discount-store pharmacy.

### Friday

It is with a heavy heart that I am writing this installment of the diary. Tomorrow I am taking my dog of 15 years to the vet to be euthanized. Yesterday, the vet examined him and concluded that my dachshund most likely suffered a stroke and has lost control of his left side. After a brief improvement, Bogey is declining again but now has scooted over to lay his head on my feet as I type.

Sigh. ♦