

# BREATHING

## In and Out

By Chris Ellis

Listening into a world  
of air flowing in and out,  
of pulmonary passages.

My stethoscope feels comfortable  
in my ears.  
The rest of the world is shut out.  
Only the reassuring sound of air  
entering and leaving the lungs.  
Nothing else matters.

Connected to the patient by the tubes  
of the symbolic scope.  
Listening intently at times.  
At others, expecting nothing,  
my mind easily wanders to other things.  
I must remember to pick  
Luke up from school at lunch time.

On yet another day it may be guessing,  
is the air entry really down on the right side?

My Guessing Tubes have often  
felt the sound of fear.  
The small child full of wet noises,  
wheezing, sticky, snotty with distress.  
Even worse, hardly any sounds at all.  
The chest shutting down,  
in a fist of bronchospasm.

The sounds of breath  
entering and leaving the lungs.

All part of a practice day.



Note: This poem is reprinted from *Ruminations from Rural Practice*, by Chris Ellis, with illustrations by Louis Hiemstra. Published by Academy Publications, 1994.