

The REMOTE CONTROL

Patient

By Chris Ellis

I never really see her.
She phones and describes symptoms
and then asks to be referred.

Please leave a prescription –
my husband will pick it up.

The children have flu;
could you leave something for them as well?

She leaves letters with messages.
She is going away on holiday
and needs some more of her medicines.
She's one of my remote control patients.

Can I also give her a letter for the school?

Somehow she seems to persuade the receptionist
to put her directly through,
for unsatisfactory telephone consultations
and something for the maid too.

No, she can't come in
she's too busy,
and her mother can't be left alone.

I'm left with the loneliness
of the long distance prescriber.



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