

Poem

Grand Rounds: An Impossible Life

Survival.
That's the name of the gene: Survival Motor Neuron.
Ironical that we say her problem was
Not enough "survival".
But in a way
A proteomic metaphor for her impossible life.

Not possible, life without SMN,
So she used some transcripts
From the other copy
And found a way to live.

Not possible, a "normal life".
Not possible, a regular class.
But you don't need muscles to think
So she found her way to Law School.
Travel? Not possible said the railway,
So she took their "not possible"
To the Supreme Court
And made it possible for everyone.
Love? marriage? Not possible.
Wrong.
You don't need muscles to love.
They found a way.
The docs said children were not possible;
"*But not inconceivable!*" she laughed.
A favourite joke
To go with the photo.
They got one thing right: this was no normal life.

What's not possible
Is to introduce
My patient, my friend
With impersonal initials.
She was *not* "C.M."
And she was never "a case".
She was Claire
And she made the impossible happen her whole life.

She would have laughed
To know that when I heard she had died
My first thought was
"*Not possible.*"

Catherine Elizabeth Pringle

Corresponding to Catherine Elizabeth Pringle, University of Ottawa, Department of Medicine Neurology, Ottawa, Ontario, K1H 8L6 Canada; epringle@toh.ca

Competing interests None declared.

Provenance and peer review Not commissioned; internally peer reviewed.



CrossMark

To cite Pringle CE. *Med Humanit* 2017;**43**:e17.

Published Online First 9 January 2017

Med Humanit 2017;**43**:e17. doi:10.1136/medhum-2016-011164