

A Summer House Call in Wisconsin

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On a cool, sunny, summer Wisconsin day
I made a house call
Landline to landline, no text messages exchanged

I followed the verbal directions, no fancy navigation system utilized
For the instructions were clearly outlined on notebook paper:
“Turn right out of the parking lot, left at the dentist’s office and proceed to the end of the street”

I parked under the oak tree with its newly green leaves
Just around the corner from the patient and her longtime abode
I knocked on the door and her kindness welcomed me

An old fashioned patient-doctor encounter
My modern day eye pressure checker completed the designated task
We talked about her medications and the home routine
Of applying the eye drops, and marking a box on her notebook paper once completed

We walked past the family photos
and the refrigerator covered with magnets
I exited her home and concluded the house call

In an age in which time and distance can instantly connect IP addresses
There will always be a place for a caring hello, a gentle smile, and a warm hug
Basic human interactions, at a patient’s street address

House calls are an anachronism in the most modern of ages
A trip back to the period when physicians made house calls regularly
And carried black bags of equipment instead of laptops or tablets

House calls can still have a place in Western health care
A privilege now typically granted to community and home health nurses
Humble interactions that mean so much more
Than any meaningful use metric

A house call validates health care and welfare
Without a code to match its true value or a modifier to capture its significance
It is an extension of the delivery of services and rounds out the sphere of care

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