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Paging: a Collection of Short Stories

Shruthi Deivasigamani, Katherine Hubbard*

Introduction: *Paging* is a series of thematically interconnected short stories that take place at a single fictional urban hospital center. The guiding questions that the stories explore are twofold: other than doctors and patients, what kinds of people spend their time in a hospital? And, what kind of place is the hospital for these people?

Methods: The background research for *Paging* began by exploring written works of fiction, nonfiction, and memoir set in hospitals. After I had developed a set of guiding research questions, I spent the summer at a major hospital in New York City, where I was able to observe the people and employees that comprised the environment of an urban medical center. These observations were used draft fiction about the kinds of dilemmas various characters in a hospital might grapple with on a daily basis.

Results: *Paging* is a series of three short stories that explore the lives of three different hospital employees at the same hospital center. The first story is about a medical assistant at an outpatient clinic who encounters an ethical dilemma that brings his personal life to work. The second is about a custodian who gets to know the patients of a hospital in a very different, but equally intimate, manner to the doctors and nurses who take care of the patients' medical needs. The third is about a woman who assists in the distribution of organs that have been harvested for transplant.

Discussion: We often think of the hospital as a place where patients go to seek care from doctors. In reality, the hospital is a far richer environment than this. *Paging* explores the other inhabitants of a hospital that allow it to be a bustling ecosystem, and offers stories from perspectives that are often overlooked.