Section Editor
Anne W. McCammon,
MD, FAAN

The common stroke

Adrian Budhram, MD

Correspondence to
Dr. Budhram:
adrian.budhram@medportal.ca

The common stroke is like a sculpture—
The elbow is crooked, the fingers are curled,
The downturned mouth is modelled in clay.
At first supple to the guiding hand, the arm
Becomes hard, spastic in the kiln of time.
Uncommon strokes might be more abstract:
A sketched half-portrait, half-neglected blur,
Or a stiffly scribbled poem of spoken errors
That falters, fumbles, stumbles off the page.

On neurology call, I meet a storm of a man.
His visual fields are as full as the midday sun,
Glaring down on me until I look away, blinded.
His language is turned earth, with vulgar sprouts
Drowned by moans of the sick, nursing banter
And the offbeat beeping of cardiac monitors.
Like raging tethered wind his limbs all gust,
Symmetrically, and stretch his cloth restraints.
At his side, I see no stroke that stirs the calm.

Between tears his sister walks me through
The gallery, shows me what I failed to see.
Crippled at nineteen by a stroke of practicality
He became a painter, the unromantic kind,
His canvas relegated to trims and vinyl sidings.
His next stroke stuttered through middle age,
A lacune of apathy large enough for him to
Crawl inside and too deep for her to reach him.
Tonight, blood thick with alcohol, pills in hand,
A stroke of misplaced clarity turns malignant.

His death is dictated between seizures and
Sore throats. What is not transcribed is that
He passed restlessly, his chest compressed like
The shoreline beaten by the rising tide, until
The storm cleared and the sky was only grey.

Listen to Dr. Budhram read this poem, available on the iPad® and Android™ devices.

Neurology®

The common stroke

Adrian Budhram

Neurology 2017;88:e167

DOI 10.1212/WNL.0000000000003863

This information is current as of April 24, 2017

Updated Information & Services

including high resolution figures, can be found at:
<http://n.neurology.org/content/88/17/e167.full>

Subspecialty Collections

This article, along with others on similar topics, appears in the following collection(s):

All Cerebrovascular disease/Stroke

http://n.neurology.org/cgi/collection/all_cerebrovascular_disease_stroke

All Clinical Neurology

http://n.neurology.org/cgi/collection/all_clinical_neurology

All Psychiatric disorders

http://n.neurology.org/cgi/collection/all_psychiatric_disorders

Permissions & Licensing

Information about reproducing this article in parts (figures, tables) or in its entirety can be found online at:

http://www.neurology.org/about/about_the_journal#permissions

Reprints

Information about ordering reprints can be found online:
<http://n.neurology.org/subscribers/advertise>

Neurology® is the official journal of the American Academy of Neurology. Published continuously since 1951, it is now a weekly with 48 issues per year. Copyright © 2017 American Academy of Neurology. All rights reserved. Print ISSN: 0028-3878. Online ISSN: 1526-632X.