

ANTHOLOGY CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Root Cause: Stories of health, harm, and reclaiming our humanity in an epidemic of loneliness

Jeannine Ouelette, Kristine Kopperud, and Elizabeth Austin are thrilled to announce a call for submissions for their forthcoming anthology, *Root Cause: Stories of health, harm, and reclaiming our humanity in an epidemic of loneliness*.

This collection of nonfiction narratives brings together diverse voices and offers an intimate glimpse into the lives of patients, healthcare professionals, and caregivers as they navigate the complex emotional and psychological landscapes shaped by solitude and illness.

These personal essays, memoirs, and reflective accounts illuminate the human side of healthcare, exploring themes such as the impact of chronic illness, the solitude of long-term treatment, mental health struggles exacerbated by medical conditions, and the unique dynamics between caregivers and those they care for.

Root Cause is a testament to the strength and vulnerability inherent in the human experience, offering readers a deep, empathetic understanding of how loneliness and healthcare intertwine. This anthology serves as a compelling reminder of the importance of connection, compassion, and community as we travel the continuum between illness and health.

This project emerged from the work of the Project for Advancing Healthcare Stewardship (PAHS), an initiative of the University of Minnesota School of Public Health. PAHS (and the pre-publication logistics of this anthology) receives funding from the U of MN's Institute for Advanced Studies. However, the anthology is not designated to be published by the University of Minnesota. It will go on submission in a typical book proposal process.

What We Are Looking For:

We are looking for nonfiction narratives that explore the profound and often overlooked experiences of isolation and loneliness within the context of healthcare.

In addition to the expected topics of cancer, mental and emotional health, and end-of-life care, we are interested in stories about:

- women's health, birth, abortion, and menopause;
- stories specific to men's health;
- dental health;
- navigating healthcare or insurance while experiencing financial hardship;
- other health experiences that fall outside more commonly told health narratives.

If you're not sure of a specific, personal health narrative to explore, you might reflect on your body's systems, head to toe (or scan for scars?), and note ways in which your body (or another close to yours) has interacted with healthcare.

Finally, while we prefer and will prioritize original work, we will happily consider previously published essays (to which you hold the rights) if you have something you believe is a perfect fit. Please send us your very best on this important theme.

We're excited to read your work.

Submission Guidelines:

Please send us your best work around 1,500 words, although longer, shorter and hybrid pieces will also be considered.

- **Formatting:** Please include your name at the top of each page, apply 1" or similar margins, and use a plainly legible font (Times New Roman, Helvetica, etc), double-spaced.
- **Biography:** Please also include a short biography (150 or fewer words) and your preferred digital identifiers.
- **Submission:** Email all materials as a single document with your name in the filename as a .doc or .docx file to: rootcauseanthology@gmail.com.
- **Deadline: October 15, 2024.** If your work is selected, the editors will be in touch regarding any revisions or clarifications.

Payment: Works appearing in *Root Cause* will each be compensated \$50, with the possibility of longer works being compensated slightly more as we are able.

About the Editors:

Jeannine Ouellette's lyric memoir, [The Part That Burns](#), was a Kirkus Best Indie Book and a finalist for the Next Generation Indie Book Award. Her work appears widely in anthologies and journals, including *Narrative*, *North American Review*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Masters Review*, and others. She holds an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts and is a Millay Colony for the Arts fellow and past juror. Her bestselling Substack, [Writing in the Dark](#), is a passionate creative community of people who "do language." In addition to *Writing in the Dark*, Ouellette teaches through the Minnesota Prison Writing Workshop and the University of Minnesota, where she also facilitates narrative health writing workshops for the Project for Advancing Healthcare Stewardship.

Kristine Kopperud is a writer and freelance creative who serves as an end-of-life doula

specializing in legacy projects. Her chapbook, "[Jaw Wiring: What You Need to Know](#)," won the Flash Nonfiction Competition at *Sweet: A Literary Confection*, and she writes widely about the birth of her daughter at 1lb 13oz and the stillbirth of her son, among other embodied experiences, for literary journals and anthologies. She is also a native of rural healthcare systems and a parent-advocate where learning delays and disabilities intersect medical diagnoses and education. More at kristinekopperud.com.

Elizabeth Austin is a writer and solo mom whose work has been published with *Thrillist*, *Reactor Mag*, *Business Insider*, and *Write or Die*, among others. She has been a guest on the KingSize Podcast and penned guest essays for several Substack newsletters. She is currently querying her first book, a memoir about her mental health struggles during her daughter's three years of leukemia treatment and the challenges they faced navigating the U.S. healthcare system. She holds an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts and lives in Bucks County, Pennsylvania with her two children and their many pets. Find her on Substack: writingelizabeth.substack.com and Instagram: @writingelizabeth

About the Project for Advancing Healthcare Stewardship:

The Project for Advancing Healthcare Stewardship (PAHS) is an initiative of the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, funded by the Institute for Advanced Studies. PAHS is dedicated to helping people become better stewards of their own health and the healthcare system.

As an interdisciplinary, creative collaborative, PAHS curates and facilitates public forums about health and healthcare stewardship. While PAHS was conceived before the COVID-19 global pandemic emerged, the pandemic shone a bright light on and escalated many of the same systemic healthcare challenges that PAHS sought to explore and address. PAHS forums use the tools of narrative medicine, creative writing, and active listening to explore the role of narrative in helping us to navigate our own health and healthcare in a system that often overwhelms us.

PAHS forums actively examine what it means to lean into radical hope even within chaos in order to imagine health and healthcare possibilities currently beyond our field of vision. The long-term aim of PAHS is to clarify our roles, individually and collectively, in stewarding a better, more equitable and sustainable healthcare system. Through illuminating our experiences of helplessness, loss, illness, wellness, caretaking, injustice, and activism in relation to the experiences of others, we can deepen our perspective and begin to light a path forward.

The *Root Cause* anthology idea emerged directly from the many powerful and unforgettable health stories shared in PAHS forums since the fall of 2020.