

dear residents

Feeling Scabulous

February 18, 2023

Dear Residents,

Last Friday's Liver Rounds felt renewing in so many ways – applicants were here, and you were there with them – the room was buzzing with good vibes. Our beloved faculty were there too. It felt like the pandemic was finally over. While we got a glimpse of what it had been like before the pandemic, we were aware that as we turn the page, the story will continue to unfold, and the narrative won't ever fully return to the way it was. This is the new era of residency interviews – hybrid (virtual + second look) until something better comes along.

In the [Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows](#), John Koenig defines *scabulous* (*adj.*) as “proud of a certain scar on your body, which is like an autograph signed to you by a world grateful for your continued willingness to play with her, even if it hurts.”

From: *scab* + *fabulous*

Residency training is your world right now and she has no doubt autographed you in indelible ways – I expect that you are proud of some of these inscriptions. Given the cognitive rather than mechanical nature of our work, I imagine that these are largely internal engravings. Some are collective scars (the COVID years) and some are singular to you.

Residency training places strains on your mind and on your body – these strains train you and some remain with you, some good, some bad. Perhaps the hardest of these are [microstresses](#), the less obvious “bumps in the road” that can add up and ripple through your day, or even cause poor sleep and linger the next day. The best buffer to microstresses are the relationships you have with each other, the shared experience, the awareness that there is this close group who knows what circling the parking lot at work feels like, what being consulted for an ICU admission entails, what epic chat does to your psyche, what the loss of a patient evokes. Our shared interests and experience engender trusted and authentic interactions with each other. This is how we cope, this is how we play, and this is how we thrive.

On Friday, I also learned that one of the patients I had cared for over Christmas was now headed to hospice. The resident I worked with on that rotation helped get her home for her last Christmas. As we chatted yesterday, we both felt proud that we managed to arrange this brief respite for her even as we readmitted her on December 26th. It was bittersweet. We felt scabulous.

We have a warm week ahead of us – its Mardi Gras - get out there and have some fun. You are fabulous.



Photo by [Aiden Craver](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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