

## FLU SHOT

**AUTHOR**

Adrian M. Schnall

**CORRESPONDENCE**

a.schnall@att.net  
216-218-5788

**DOI**

10.20411/pai.v1i2.143

**AFFILIATION**

Department of Medicine, Case Western Reserve School of Medicine, Cleveland, OH

Hold it like a dart.  
Prepare her arm,  
squeeze the skin,  
then use your wrist.  
She'll feel nothing  
but that gentle twist of flesh.

She looks away.  
"Shall I tell you when?" I say,  
smiling as I drop the used syringe  
in the sharp-safe bin.  
I live for that look  
of disbelief.

I do not speak to her  
of the debacle of '76.  
Swine flu panic in the air,  
hundreds of thousands clamoring  
for the needle of protection.  
In the aftermath,  
two hundred with Guillain-Barré,  
thirty dead.  
It was worth it, the experts said,  
We saved millions from the flu.

Not worth it for Jonathan,  
who lived the ten worst days of his life  
on life support in ICU,  
nerve fibers eaten away,  
ravaged by that malady.  
He couldn't talk for a week.  
It took him a month to walk,  
a twenty-five year old  
with an old man's limp.

He never got the shot again,  
didn't need to read the headlines.  
No black plague descended in '76,  
no swine flu,  
even in those  
who chose not to get stuck.

Yet I still immunize,  
proselytize for it.  
I examine Jonathan,  
watch sadly as he limps across the room  
and try to remember:  
millions have been saved  
in other years.