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ART OF MEDICINE

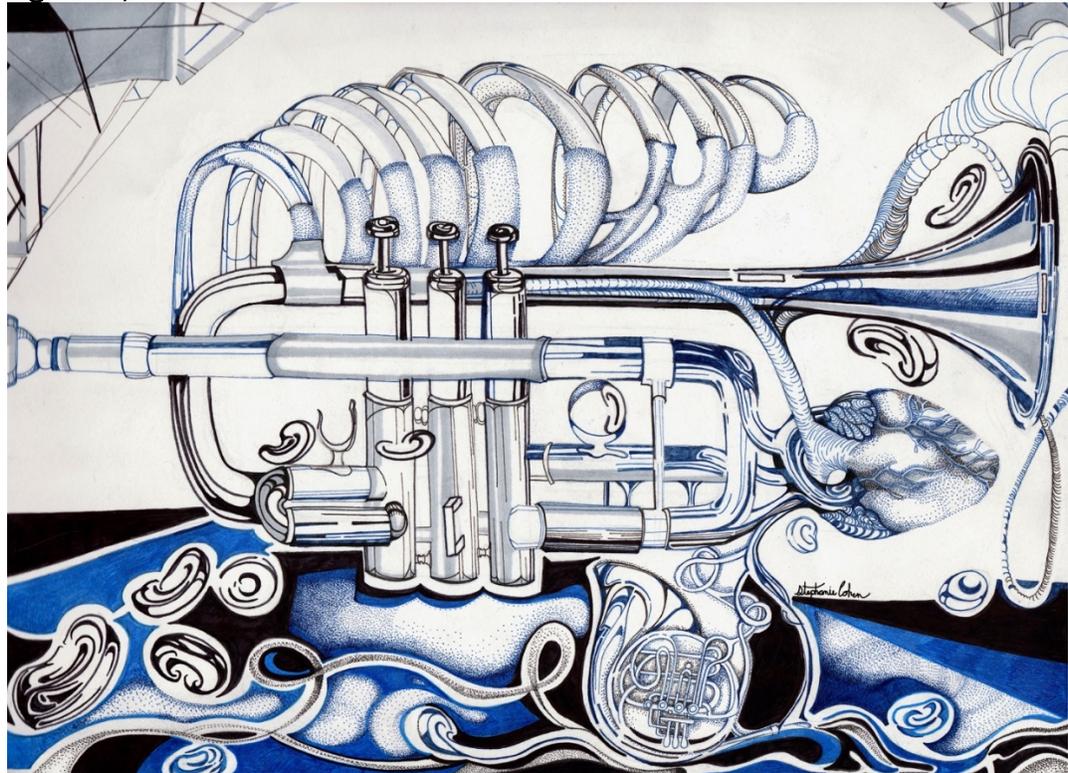
Equilibrium

Stephanie Cohen, MD

Abstract

Just as cellular imbalances on a microscopic level can have macroscopic consequences in systemic diseases, so one instrument playing out of tune in an orchestra can compromise the harmony of the entire symphony. In addition, the practice of medicine itself is a balance between science and humanism; after all, physicians are treating multidimensional human beings.

Figure. *Equilibrium*



Media

Ink on Bristol board, 17" x 11".

Caption

This drawing seeks to explore the theme of equilibrium through music, medicine, and art. In music, if a trumpeter decides to improvise and plays his own melody, the French horn player, at first, may follow along. Eventually, however, he can no longer compensate and musical dissonance ensues. Cells and organs can be thought of as the musical instruments in the biological symphony of the human body: in cancer, cells become unresponsive to their environment and also bypass internal checkpoints. As a result, there is an imbalance between cellular proliferation and apoptosis—cells begin to divide uncontrollably. In the gut, an imbalance of flora can lead to *Clostridioides difficile* pseudomembranous colitis. Neurological and psychiatric diseases can also occur secondary to neurotransmitter imbalances. Clearly, disequilibrium is evident throughout all pathophysiology. In addition, this musical metaphor can be extended to the health care system. Doctors, advanced practitioners, nurses, pharmacists, and social workers are the musicians in a symphony. Each has a particular role, and **effective communication** is absolutely necessary to deliver the best possible care. What is most important to bear in mind is that the conductor is the patient.

Stephanie Cohen, MD is a general surgery resident at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts. She earned a BFA degree in studio art and a BS degree in biochemistry in 2016. She has been drawing since she could pick up a pencil, and her interests include technical and medical illustration as well as developing educational tools for patients and trainees. She is an illustrator for the *National Surgery Review* and has also published drawings in *Annals of Surgical Oncology*, *Open Access Surgery*, and *Practical Radiation Oncology*.

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Conflict of Interest Disclosure

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