

POETRY

Declaration of conflict of interest

Declare the fall-flat jokes as you hope for the best at question period, which follows you like Jerry Lee Lewis. Beware the killer! Bare your soul, beat your chest, stop the foot twitch, stop leaning too close to the microphone. What you? Podium-clutch?

Pray to the pharmaceutical disclosure in the sky that you'll get to talk again, that the reps in the audience will think you *fair*, and the doctors think you *free from any bias*, but you *are* biased, quoting numbers needed to treat the unsettled question of whether more research is needed in your phrasing, if the empty seats are votes for your irrelevance, if you can be bought by paltry retainers and if you stay up late at night, priceless, laughing at how many boards seem to need advice, crying that no one heeds it, knowing your fate is evaluated on a scale of one to five.

The Big Pharma declaration spans two full slides, titans in blue powerpoint pulse, the implications of being a world expert evident in how your voice carries in a dim, seen-it-all hall with a hissing projector and a restless crowd buzzing on free morning coffee, the crowd writing about your manic laser pointer in the comments section of the evaluation form (*too red, too circlly, too stabbing*) and you are praying that clear disclosure is salvation, that the polite clapping that follows your talk will devolve into BigPharmaKumbaya and the all the names will be like a healing spell, the names will cure every disease in the room.

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