Shiftwork – A Collection of ER Haikus

These short haikus represent the “nature” of the emergency department– chaotic, fragmented, and juxtapositions of terrifying illness with moments of humor and sweetness. It may seem jarring to move from one snapshot to the next, but that is the cadence of the ER from one room to the next. Enjoy this stroll through a day in the life of the ER doctor!

*Hand-off*  
Septic shock in four,  
Sober re-eval in five,  
My friend Beth in six.

*Acute on Chronic*  
Flares light up the board:  
Back pain, asthma, CHF-Exacerbation.

*A Rock in a Hard Place*  
Doubled over, pale  
The man’s worst pain plagues his side.  
Then the stone passes.

*Looks Like Cancer*  
I told him the news.  
Wrinkled hands writhing, he nods,  
Twists his wedding ring.

*Nursemaid’s Elbow*  
Holds her arm crying,  
Shrieks through the twist and pop-  
Reaches for the treat.

*The Band-Aid*  
Homeless, high on meth  
Depressed, no primary care.  
Here is a sandwich.

*POLST*  
Unbroken ribs. Peace.  
No pokes, bruises, shocks, or pain.  
Hand held; sweet farewell.

*Intubation*  
Tube passes the cords,  
Breathing life back. He’ll survive  
To tell his story.

*Not Just Constipation*  
“Doc, I have to poop.  
I’ve gained so much weight. I’m fat.”  
Surprise! You’re a mom!

*The Last Patient*  
Vermillion border  
One last stitch- smile repaired.  
Kiss this shift goodbye.

*Tetanus Prophylaxis*  
Shame beats from red ears.  
Parents said no, so she pierced  
Solo. Infection.