

In sickness and in health

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Physical and mental fitness.

When my uncle was in his late forties, he began to notice numbness in his legs, especially when he sat for a long period of time. The tingling grew more persistent and pervasive and after a few years, it began to be accompanied by muscle weakness and an increased difficulty walking. The doctors first began by ruling out all of the major neuromuscular disorders: multiple sclerosis, ALS, muscular dystrophy, and other, rarer diseases. One by one, they ruled out options, and one by one, specialists scratch their heads. My uncle lay motionless inside of MRI machines time and again, and all the while his legs grew weaker, until he was mostly unable to walk and confined to a wheelchair. In this month's issue of InTheFray, we explore our health, what it means to be healthy and what it is like to cope with illness. We begin with Lori Marie LaSpada's essay *Hitting the genetic jackpot*, about her experiences living with a rare blood disease. Next, Lori Law tells the story of a woman waiting for a kidney transplant in *Independence Day*. Paul Jury shares his experience with a police officer and a jellyfish sting in *Jellyfish conversations*. In *The rhythm of remembrance in health and healing*, Larry Jaffe shares several poems from his recent book *One Child Sold*. Jacqueline Barba reviews *The Murderer in Damned and Damaged*. Finally, we hear from Tian Miao as she shares her view of portions of Chinese culture in *The Sadness*. Eventually, the doctors did figure out what was happening with my uncle. Calcium deposits in his spine pressed on his spinal cord, damaging it enough to interrupt the signal between his brain and his legs. The good news is that the damage has been stopped and his symptoms won't progress any further. The bad news is that it won't get any better. I think it is easy for those of us blessed with good health to take our health for granted. It is one more thing that we should try to remember to be thankful for each day.