

The patient not helped

By Daniel Choi

(an homage to Robert Frost's "the Road not Taken")

Two patients came to critical care,
And sorry I could not help both
And be one doctor, standing there
And gave supplemental O₂ to both,
Only one's PaO₂ rose with my care;

Then took the other, gasping for air
And having perhaps a septal defect,
Because he said his illness was rare;
I decided to give his CXR a check
And a hole in his atrial septum was there.

And both came in with low PaO₂,
With their high minute ventilations,
Oh, normal was their PaCO₂!
Yet now knowing their conditions,
I wondered if surgery would do.

I fill my paperwork with a sigh,
Somewhere last night at the ER,
Two patients came in hyperventilating, and I –
I forgot about V/Q inequality there,
And if it costs me my license, I'll likely cry.