

Breast cancer has become a source of fear for many midlife women. This reality and the emotions that the disease evokes in a patient are presented poignantly in Ronna Wineberg's short story "A Crossing." This work explores a health professional as patient, this time Alice, who has found a lump in her breast. She is forced to continue to carry out her patient care duties, but is unable to repress thoughts about the care she may require. When her fears are realized and she must undergo surgery, she approaches the event and preparations leading to it with her customary, matter-of-fact, efficient physician attitude. This has served her well as a doctor, but prevents her from accepting her own illness. She tries to keep her cancer at a distance. She must juggle the busy responsibilities of her midlife concerns—patients and her family—while attending to the preparations for her surgery and her own physical and emotional needs. Alice's world and perceptions are changed forever as a result of her diagnosis. The story provides important insights for us as health professionals, teachers, and as patients. Alice must navigate her own process of acceptance, first briefly resenting her husband's good health, and then finally accepting her diagnosis and illness. Ultimately, she faces her breast cancer with sadness, dignity, and grace, thinking after her surgery, "She wasn't really lucky; she hadn't returned to any world she knew. But it was what she had."