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From the Editor

[2011 Question of the Year](#)

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Letters to the Editor

Cover Art

Artist's Statement: *Sleeping Beauty*

A premature baby leaving the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) to go home is a very special moment and an incredible gift to every parent that experiences that joyful feeling. The days, weeks, and months families spend with their babies in the NICU are trying and sometimes go by in a blur. Most families are intimidated by the highly intense setting and do not usually feel comfortable taking pictures, even if they do have a camera. Yet months and years later, they think back on how far their child has come, and they often wish they had more memories of those difficult days, which are now, thankfully, in the past. For my entire career as an academic pediatric surgeon, I have always had a camera close by, and many a family has contacted me, years later, to see if perchance I may have some images of their baby during those difficult days and nights in the NICU. Most of the time, I have been able to provide a few snapshots, usually taken for teaching purposes, often showing our team of students, residents, and nurses at work. Most have not been works of art, and certainly not masterpieces. Yet their impact on the families, and the children



Sleeping Beauty

themselves, once they were old enough to appreciate their significance, has been extraordinary. It became obvious to me that a photographic journal of their baby's NICU stay would be a treasured gift to these families. So a few years ago, I started weekly "NICU Rounds," photographing every baby in the unit, for whom a signed consent has been obtained. After discharge, a small album is assembled with a few images from each week the baby was in the hospital, and the album is sent to the family. The response has been uniformly of wonder and gratitude. I continue to be amazed at the deep impact of such a small thing!

The baby pictured in *Sleeping Beauty* had grown well during her NICU stay and had reached her day of discharge. Her mother had been staying with her around the clock to get used to her care, and all had been proceeding well—except for burping. The baby just seemed not to be interested in wasting time making funny noises (although she did enjoy all the back patting that went along with our efforts). She by far preferred sleeping to any other postprandial activity. After a gentle but futile battle of wits with her newborn daughter, the mother finally gave in and allowed her daughter to settle down and take a nap in the most accessible and convenient location that presented itself: the palm of her hand. I had been taking my weekly pictures of the baby during her last NICU day feed, so I happened to be right there, and I was fortunate to capture this precious moment in her life.

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