

A Note of Thanks to Doctor Rees

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With a free rhythm, not too fast (♩=120)

The musical score is written on a single treble clef staff in 3/4 time. The tempo is marked as 'With a free rhythm, not too fast (♩=120)'. The melody consists of quarter notes and half notes, with some phrases ending in a fermata. The lyrics are printed below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes.

Doc - tor Rees (co - lon): I'm wri - ting this let - ter
To thank you for what I have re - cent - ly learned.
Af - ter our talk, I now un - der - stand bet - ter.
That would not be so, had you not been con - cerned.
Nee - ding more facts, I pe - rused the col - lec - tion
The li - bra - ry keeps; I found quite a good book.
So now, I know much a - bout rec - tal in - spec - tion,
Though rec - tums are pla - ces I rare - ly need look.

Complete lyrics are found on the other side

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Doctor Rees (colon): I'm writing this letter
To thank you for what I have recently learned.
After our talk, I now understand better.
That would not be so, had you not been concerned.
Needing more facts, I perused the collection
The library keeps; I found quite a good book.
So now, I know much about rectal inspection,
Though rectums are places I rarely need look.

When we succeed with this change we're now trying,
When few folk will smoke, through persuasion and laws,
We'll see a change in statistics of dying,
With lung cancer being a less prominent cause.
Next behind lungs on the list as a locus
Where tumors develop, in rich lands like these,
Are rectum and colon, and so we must focus
On them, in our work of preventing disease.

Some say it helps to consume much more fibre
And rarely eat Haagen-Daas, lamb chops, or Brie;
Those vegetarians I've met in cyber-
Space out on the Internet tend to agree.
But, for the millions who won't change their diet,
Although that would also be good for the heart,
There is a technique, if they're willing to try it,
That often ensures no malignancies start.

The flexible sigmoidoscope was invented
To access our guts through the holes in their ends
Where feces well coloured and gases ill scented
Both exit the body. It threads through the bends
In the sigmoid, the part of the colon just over
The rectum that's shaped like an "S", and can go
Inside the left colon. It's used to discover
Conditions for which, perhaps, no symptoms show.

In the early summer of 1993, Dr. Carolyn Rees, a physician then practicing in San Jose, California, heard some of my safe sex songs and suggested this as another subject likely to interest me. She briefly described the instrument and its purpose, and I later consulted these two references:

Sudhir K. Dutta and Edward J. Kowalewski. Flexible Sigmoidoscopy for Primary Care Physicians. New York: Alan R. Liss, Inc., 1987

Ronald M. Katon, Emmet B. Keeffe, and Clifford S. Melnyk. Flexible Sigmoidoscopy. Toronto: Grune & Stratton, Inc., 1985

Polyps are growths that should not be occurring.
The ones in the bowel, when young, are benign,
But they can enlarge, and there's danger deferring
Removal, because, when they're old, they malign.
Most bowel polyps, statistics have shown us,
Are found near the sigmoid. A primary care
Physician can look for them, and, as a bonus,
Remove them, by using a scope and a snare.

Fibres bring outside light in to illumine;
An image is focused on fibres of glass.
Three millimetres wide, there's enough room in
The biopsy channel for thin tools to pass.
One has a loop in its end, which is tightened
To snare polyps' bases, then current's applied,
And heat cuts their stalks as the flesh becomes whitened.
A biopsy's made from the parts that weren't fried.

And so, Doctor Rees, thanks again for these verses
That I'd not have written without your request.
We, who must visit physicians and nurses,
Should try to keep current with what they suggest.
As it ascends, up that slippery slope in
The base of my gut, every three years or two,
When I feel the flexible sigmoidoscope in
My rectum, I'll surely be thinking of you.