The Art of Medicine

Traveling exhibit at Alpert Medical School offers portraits of rare diseases

The Rare Disease United Foundation launched its 2015 Beyond the Diagnosis Art Exhibit at the Alpert Medical School in February. This month it will travel to medical schools and hospitals across the country.

The Foundation created the exhibit as a way of raising awareness about the many unmet needs of the rare disease community. “We believe that art leaves a lasting impression and the exhibit will be seen by those who we need most to see us, the medical community,” said Patricia Weltin, founder and executive director of the Foundation.

Professional artists donated their time and talent to paint rare disease patients. In a story of the exhibit on Brown’s website, two of the children are described: “There’s Austin, who drums and loves spicy food, and younger brother Max, who loves building with Legos. They have Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a degenerative neuromuscular disease.”

And, “There’s Harper, a little girl who loves touching her baby brother and getting kisses from the family dog, at least sometimes. She has Angelman’s syndrome, an autism-like disorder.”

“Everyone is characterized as a disease,” said Dr. Craig Eberson, a surgeon and associate professor of orthopaedics who is also a member of the Foundation board. “We’re all guilty. I can picture a case. I can picture the X-rays. I can picture all the screws I put in but then ‘What’s that kid’s name again?’

“But realize that you have an interaction with a patient for 15 minutes and they have what they have for their entire life.” He added that when he treats patients with rare diseases, it has to be in collaboration with the patient and the family. They are the experts.

For the complete story on the exhibit and information on the Foundation, visit: https://news.brown.edu/articles/2015/02/medart and http://www.rarediseaseunited.org.