

STFM SLIDES

PRACTICE SLIDE

Now is your chance to practice some of what we've been discussing.

Take a pause from watching this video. Read the example of a narrative essay submission, *An Unforgettable Case*, by Dr. Robin Winter, as if you were reviewing it using this deeper dive framework. Take notes if you like.

You will also have a chance to read the revision based on the feedback the author received.

You can also read the published version.

Then come back and listen to a panel discussion of the reviewing process

ORIGINAL SUBMISSION

Reviewers liked this essay and thought it had potential to be published. Some of its strengths included that it tells a good story – the opening in particular has a strong hook, and pulls the reader in

The topic of medical error is one of enduring interest and concern to physicians. Also, the essay engages the issue of structural racism, which is both timely and of critical importance to the healthcare system and the larger society.

While many essays are concerned with a medical mistake, this one takes a novel approach in that it considers how the meaning of the incident changes as the author matures in his profession

Overall, it is well-suited for the journal *Family Medicine*, because it hits many of the journal's priorities for a narrative essay – it is not static, but rather describes a personal evolution; it has lessons that could have value for learners; and it's easy to have an emotional connection with the story the author tells.

Nevertheless, there were also several concerns expressed. Notably, although the topic of structural racism is touched on, both reviewers felt this theme could be developed a bit more.

Sometimes the essay seemed to lose focus, such as when it talked a good deal about resident work hours

There was a desire for the essay to be more self-reflective, to show more of what the author was thinking and feeling at each shift in his connection to this seminal event

The final paragraph is where all the ideas and themes of the essay should come together. Reviewers felt that this concluding paragraph could be strengthened to explicitly summarize the lessons learned.

REVISION 1

As you can see, in the revision, the author addressed many of the initial concerns of the reviewers, such as expanding on his insights about structural racism, While initial recommendations focused a lot on the content of the essay, refocusing some discussions to better support his main points, making explicit how the meaning of the event changed over the course of his career, adding more insights about his own feelings, and reworking the final paragraph.

Reviewers found the essay considerably improved. Note the reviewer comment that the essay was now “truly unforgettable!” Whereas their initial comments focused mostly on the content of the essay, in this round their comments were more stylistic and paid more attention to the writing. For example, they suggested making the writing more succinct, working to smooth the transitions from one section to another, removing pejorative terms such as “drug addicts,” adding more detail to provide color, and trying to “show” more than tell. An example of the former is in the opening paragraph.

IMPORTANT TAKEAWAYS

As a reviewer, some important things to keep in mind are the following:

- 1) Emotional impact – does the story move you?
- 2) Larger societal context – does the author recognize that medicine does not happen in a vacuum?
- 3) Does the story have a clear spine, an obvious idea you can identify and perhaps help bring forth?
- 4) Most narrative essays are not only about patients and families, but about the author as well. Does the author describe how the event affected them professionally, even personally? Do they discuss what they learned, how they were changed?