

PEDIATRIC CLERKSHIP HUMANITIES PROJECTS JUNE 2005

--, you did a very good job of “getting inside the head” of this little kid undergoing an LP. I liked the way you used the first person voice to express what the child was both noticing and feeling. You provided lots of details of both what a child might observe, and how s/he might feel about it. I think your project made us all see an LP through the eyes of a child. Thanks very much. Dr. Shapiro

--, thank you so much for an unusually creative and original project. I know that sometimes these “assignments” can feel onerous, so I was glad you figured out a way to combine “work time” and “family time.” Needless to say, you have two absolutely adorable kids, who will either grow up to be great doctors or great actors. I was also interested in the “images” of doctoring that, even as very small kids, they had absorbed presumably from media and popular culture. What was striking to me were the themes of power and control that seemed to be associated with medical practice. Thanks for such a hilarious demonstration that also made us think. Dr. Shapiro

Hi --. The alternating lines of your poem cleverly presented the differing priorities of medical team and family. Both were concentrating on what they needed to pay attention to, but while the parents don’t need to know the APGAR or O2 levels, the physician never should forget about the human dimension, as the title of the poem suggests. When I read the poem through again, I realized the insight of the last line, in which you suggest that, when both family and doctors do their jobs, this new human life is given the best chance possible. Nice work, Dr. Shapiro

--, your project was both creative and thought-provoking. I also admired the way you took charge of the group, and “facilitated” the exercise you’d designed – it showed real leadership skills. In terms of your “Rorschach,” it was fascinating that everyone imagined a developing world scenario – it’s hard to accept that such need exists right in our own backyard. Your “pea” metaphor is something that will stay with me a long time – that issue is one I have struggled with much of my life, and have never reached an entirely satisfactory resolution. I hope you do not think it is presumptuous of me if I caution you not to be too hard on yourself in this regard. By all means, do all you can, but accept that, like anyone, you have limits, and cannot save the world on your own. I

suspect just by your presence you will be an inspiring role-model and do great good. Please remember that your life belongs to others, but it also belongs to you. Dr. Shapiro

Hi --. I really liked your poem, although it was very sad. But you did a great job of really speaking for this little child. You were extremely effective in looking at the strange world of medicine through his (or her) little eyes, and especially at capturing the fear and pain. Repeating the first stanza at the end with its series of questions made the whole poem especially poignant. The writing showed real sensitivity. Thank you very much for writing something so true and touching. Dr. Shapiro

--, you wrote a lovely poem. Its rhyme scheme was reminiscent of “’Twas Night Before Christmas,” which added a comical overlay to the work. But what started out as a humorous portrayal of a student’s first experience on-call, suddenly became much more in the last eight lines of the poem. The beautiful image of a sick little boy blowing kisses touched us all and, as you helped us all see, was “a small act of something divine.” As we talked about in class, those moments are always available to us, if only we open our eyes to see them. Thank you very much for this project. Dr. Shapiro

--, I’m glad you tackled the very difficult subject of child abuse. This is the dark underbelly of pediatrics, where we get an unwilling glimpse at how ugly and evil human behavior can be. There is a lot of pain, as well as power, in this poem. The images are disturbing, full of suffering and anger. You seem to hint at the generational aspects of abuse that, all too often, seem unchanging and unchangeable. Can people escape their demons? Is there ever retribution or justice? The questions you raise are hard to answer, but harder to ignore. Thank you for this beautifully written and heart-wrenching poem. Dr, Shapiro

--, this was a great project. You took the typical “demanding,” “difficult” parent and made the effort to spend some time in her shoes. What you discovered is that most of the content of her concerns (if not her process!) were things you would have shared if you had been the child’s mother. And you’re right – being willing to enter into her world did not change her, did not make her a nicer person. But sometimes by understanding what a parent (or patient) wants, and what that person fears can help you interact with them more effectively. For example, saying to this mom, “I understand that you want to make sure

we give your child the best possible care,” may reassure her that you not only see her as “difficult,” but as concerned and caring. Looking for common ground, looking beneath anger and demandingness offers the best chance of working with people who may indeed be difficult, but are also suffering and afraid. This was a great project. Thank you, Dr. Shapiro

--, I actually liked your poem a lot. The short lines echoed the cadences found in a chart note. You describe both the course of the patient’s illness and the course of the relationship between the patient and the medical students. Happily, in this case both have a positive outcome. I particularly admired your persistence in the face of the patient’s difficult course. You know the saying, “Just showing up is half the battle.” That is true in doctoring as in most endeavors. By pursuing relationship and offering care despite obstacles and resistance, you can achieve a great deal. Being present with your patients when they are grateful, when they are angry, when they are afraid, not running away from them (emotionally if not literally), is a key element of good doctoring. Thanks for writing this piece, Dr. Shapiro

--, I can see from this project that you are a skillful interviewer. You asked good, open-ended questions, and I suspect from the extensive answers your patient provided that you were a very good listener and nonjudgmental. The interview itself gave us all a wide window into the experience of a chronically ill person. I was struck by how much she had lost as a result of Crohn’s disease, as well as how much resilience she demonstrated. The gap between her aspirations and her expectations was heartbreaking. As for her “banner,” that I thought was a *really good* idea! Thanks, --, for such an interesting project. Dr. Shapiro