

**PEDIATRICS CLERKSHIP HUMANITIES PROJECTS FEB 2009**

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Hi -- and --. Thank you for choosing to do a project about Child Life. The people I've met through that program have been uniformly dedicated, caring, and creative; they remind me of why it requires a village to heal a patient :-). I also really liked the lesson you drew from your interviews with the staff, i.e., physicians should appreciate but not rely on Child Life to normalize the alien environment of the hospital for patients; and to try to reduce anxiety and scariness that hospitalization inevitably provokes in patients of all ages. An excellent project! Best, Dr. Shapiro

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This was a very interesting and thoughtful reflection on a kid with Kawasaki's. --, I appreciated the way you acknowledged your own fear, and worked to make the signs and symptoms of this disease less threatening. --, I liked that you acknowledged how overwhelming a difficult diagnostic process can be for parents; and how you could empathize with the emotional rollercoaster they experienced. And --, your "crash-and-burn" motorcycle was a terrific way of "representing" this disease and its potential danger.

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Hi --. It was so nice to see you again, and to see that third year is agreeing with you! You did a great job in representing the three points of view – kid, team, and parent. Your project showed clearly just how divergent the perspectives and priorities of patient, family members, and physician can be. Of course it is crucial to address the medical concerns; but it is also important to acknowledge the shame and guilt of the father; and the fear and confusion of the child. You obviously understand that very well, and your ability to identify, respect, and reconcile differing agendas will make you an outstanding doctor. All the best, Dr. Shapiro

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Hi --. You created an amazing project for the humanities session. I so respected the honesty you showed in talking about your reaction to this patient. From what I've heard and observed, feelings of fear and the desire to withdraw from patients are not uncommon in physicians, but they are rarely acknowledged or discussed. The contrast between the narrator's and the patient's voices in your poem was powerful and compelling. This worked helped us all to see the importance of seeking the humanity in every patient, no matter how "impaired" they may be. Truly excellent work. Dr. Shapiro

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Hi --. Thank you for your reflection on this continuity experience with this patient.

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Hi --, how nice to have gotten the chance to see you twice in one week! You are such a multi-talented person. You contributed such a strong poem to our session (and you read it with great conviction and power). The story you told was heartbreaking and touching. Even more compelling was the reason you wrote the poem in the first place – to find a way to move closer to a patient with whom you had trouble connecting. I am so proud of you for doing this work to understand someone who initially seemed difficult and perhaps even a bit repugnant. You do not have to love this patient, but you do need to know that he is loved by someone. By witnessing the love of this mother (with her own challenges and shortcomings) you succeeded in connecting with the humanity of your patient. Well done indeed, as an artist and as a doctor! All the best, Dr. Shapiro

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-- and --, I liked this story you told of a teen with lupus who started by mistrusting and blaming his doctors, but over the four weeks of his hospitalization evolved into feelings of appreciation and gratitude for their help in managing aspects of his condition. It taught an important message of patience, understanding, and goodwill, even in the face of angry, “bad” behavior in the patient. Your project was able to perceive the shame and despair this kid felt at suddenly transforming from “normal teenager” to patient with a chronic and dangerous disease. Despite his initial hostility, he deserved your conscientious care – and he received it. Nice work, you two! Dr. Shapiro

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Thanks for your photographic reflection on the screaming two-week old. I was impressed by your insight that this infant must use all of herself to signal her distress, discomfort, and needs to the world. It made me realize how imperfect communication is between all of us; and how health care providers must constantly be on the lookout to appreciate *all* of the signals that their patients send them, the verbal, the nonverbal, the messages beneath the messages. Very good project, thank you! Dr. Shapiro

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Hi --, you offered us an important issue to mull over. As Dr. X observed, while a g-tube may offer the patient the best outcome, it is fraught with psychological symbolism for many parents. Especially in the patient you described, who appeared reasonably healthy, it must have been so difficult for the parents to accept this clear sign that they had a seriously sick little girl. Failure to thrive is always a traumatic condition for parents to contend with, because it is so easy for them to blame themselves (and sometimes, of course, the parents are responsible).

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This was a distressing incident that you described, --. It must have been shocking to realize that this kid's medical condition had likely started out as a simple otitis media that had been missed again and again.

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--, I really enjoyed your picture and haiku. As I mentioned, I know a lot about NICUs from personal experience, but I'd never heard the term "growth room" and I loved it! It made me think of a hothouse, filled with tender little plants. Your haiku just reinforced this image, and imbued it with serenity, tranquility, and peace. I imagined your haiku being recited over all those little babies, and it was a lovely thought. Best, Dr. Shapiro

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Hi --, nice to see you twice in one week! Thank you for your limerick about the teen with a sore throat and the upset mom. Very clever and cute. You had some excellent insights into how to work with a parent who was concerned about the quality of her son's treatment. Emotions tend to run high when a child is sick; and in the end, it is up to the physician to smooth and moderate them to ensure that the best care is provided to the patient.