

PEDIATRICS HUMANITIES PROJECTS, MARCH 2007

--, you chose a really important topic, and approached it with an excellent combination of creativity and shock value, which I think would attract the attention of your target population. Teens adore cynicism: "Cigarettes cause lung cancer? Tell me something I don't know." Your poster with its striking visuals would get noticed – and give teens something to think about. It also has a cumulative power – it's one thing to risk lung cancer, but 10 other medical problems as well? Thanks for the reminder that this is a public health problem all physicians need to take seriously. Best, Dr. Shapiro

All I can say is, you have one cute son! And it looks like you've started him off with all the important ingredients of a happy secure, childhood: trust, stimulation, adventure, sleep, laughter, and lots and lots of love.

I really liked your project for its "professional" implications as well. Not only did it humanize the physician (you :-)), but it expressed the infinite preciousness of a child to his or her parents. I also appreciated your point about having more empathy for the parents' perspective in the pediatric encounter. Sometimes students on Peds (and even some residents) start seeing parents as the enemy (and occasionally with some reason). But it's important to understand the fierce protectiveness that parents feel, their utter sense of responsibility for their children, and their devastating helplessness when their kids fall sick. Thanks for helping us to understand that when parents act "crazy," it's usually pretty understandable if we both to listen. All the best to you and your family.
Dr. Shapiro

Hi -- and --. This was a great patient education project. Nursing bottle syndrome isn't life-threatening, but it is common and can cause real problems. Your pamphlet used really good visuals (I particularly liked the nursing baby with the line through it and the "equation" at the bottom of the page. It's clearly written; uses legible type; and is not too detailed, while simultaneously containing lots of useful explanations. I also liked the way in your example you understood the mom's concerns, were willing to negotiate with her, and offered alternative options, rather than simply saying "don't." Nice work! Dr. Shapiro

--, I was really impressed with your work. As I mentioned in class, to me the poem was a wonderful reflection of the science and art of medicine. You brought both a clinical and compassionate eye (and fingers) to the bedside of this patient, understanding his suffering both medically and emotionally/spiritually. I (and obviously several other students) resonated to your focus on the eyes. You said it well, "The eyes are the windows to the soul;" and too often physicians forget (or are not comfortable) to really look for what the eyes are asking. The contrast between the wide-open eyes that are "blindly trusting" was a powerful image. I agree with you that so much of medicine is about trust (both ways); and often it is at least partially blind. I guess that's what makes it trust, right? Finally, in this regard, although you were very humble in not attributing the father's diagnosis to your intervention, I believe the trust he felt for you was likely significant in persuading him to go to the ER. This was a moving and insightful reflection. I was very touched by it. Best, Dr. Shapiro

--, I was very happy to hear that you had not been dissuaded from your desire to become a pediatrician. I remember you as perhaps the smartest student in our PD group; and in my experience, very bright students who are going into primary specialties are often told they are "wasting" themselves. Fortunately, you have been able to see through such rhetoric to the "heart" of what medicine – indeed, life – is all about. The quote you included in your presentation sums up so well what is really meaningful in life, and I think you will find that in pediatrics.

I also enjoyed the insights you had about what goes into making a good pediatrician. The multiple roles you identified rang very true in my experience; as did the observation that pediatricians are a "special breed." The opportunity to have continuity relationships with children and their families, to see babies turn into kids, kids into adolescents, to be a trusted confidante and advocate are indeed blessings.

Much good luck on your career path, --, and congratulations on summarizing what a life in pediatrics can mean. I'm sure your passion provided a different perspective on Peds for at least some of your classmates. It was a pleasure to see you again. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Your poem was very touching, --. It was a really good decision to write it from the point of view of the little kid with the heart condition because that made all of us identify with her rather than the healthy, "normal" X. I felt like echoing the little narrator's title question: "Why do such things happen?" Of course there are no answers that would satisfy even a moderately compassionate person; so we have to make our own answers. One response you can provide as a physician is to take the best care you can of all those who suffer, all those whom life/fate has treated unfairly. It doesn't make it any fairer, but perhaps you can help patients become more accepting of their own lives, rather than

wishing they were someone else. Thank you for this insightful and empathic work. Best,
Dr. Shapiro

-- and --, you came up with a *really* creative project. As Dr. X said, this is the first time in 5 years we've ever seen an animated crib and apnea monitor :-). Despite (or more likely because of – think Borat?!) the humor, you raised some thought-provoking points as well. What does it say when the inanimate objects in the patient's room are the most feeling things around? And how does it happen that sometimes some of the less powerful people in the room - I'm thinking the patient, the family members – are reduced to virtual objects, assumed to have no feelings, fears, or desires in relationship to the illness event? You succeeded both in making us laugh and making us think. Thanks for both. Best, Dr. Shapiro P.S. If I'm ever able to cash in on this original work, I will be sure to share the profits equitably :-).