

PEDS REFLECTION PROJECTS 4/12

Dear --, nice to see you after all this time. I can't believe you're a third year already (almost 4th year), although I bet you can believe it pretty easily :-). Thanks for a great advocacy project on a crucially important topic – car safety and seatbelts. I thought you designed an extremely persuasive patient/parent educational brochure. It was aesthetically pleasing (note how happy the kid looks in his carseat!) and informative. I especially liked the myths and facts section. Here you anticipated child/parent rationalizations for not using seatbelts, and challenged their veracity. Your project demonstrated excellent skills in both patient communication and education, in that you used clear but nonpatronizing language and included facts that would grab the attention of your audience. As it happens, the 9 year old child of a family friend was recently in a terrible car accident and was not wearing a seatbelt. If he survives, he will be a quadriplegic. Until we can make those statistics you cite about seatbelt behavior 100%, there is still work to be done. Impressive work. Dr. Shapiro

Hi --, thanks for such a lighthearted and (as it turned out) personal project. I apologize that we did not have more time to discuss it in class, but it was really delightful. Your manner of telling the story was amusing, and also captured the enormous frustration learners (and sometimes even seasoned pediatricians!) can feel when confronted with a crying, screaming, violently resistant kid. It was a great tour de force that you were BOTH the difficult patient and the exasperated doctor! A very clever formulation that caused your audience to feel empathy for both parties when we discovered you *were* that little monster :-). Kids generally *don't* want to be at the doctor's; and they sometimes *will* throw their tongue depressor boxes to the ground, no matter how cleverly the kind doctor has constructed them. The main thing of course is to remember, as you so clearly did, just how scary and miserable it feels when you're sick and some white-coated guy is poking and prodding you and sticking stuff down your very painful throat. An original way of getting us to reflect more deeply about what empathy is all about. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Hi --, what an interesting experience you chose to present. As we discussed, it does happen that kids (and others) will see you as a role model. Just by being who you are and doing what you're doing, you may open possibilities for your patients (and others in the community). This speaks to the esteem in which physicians are still held, and also the potential physicians still have to influence the lives of others. As a woman, I resonate with the message you sent to this young woman – that with hard work, she could set her goals as high as she wanted. Your poem showed great sensitivity to how differently, even in this day and age, girls can be socialized depending on their families and culture. As we discussed in class, in offering new ways of looking at the world, it is always wise

to be respectful of the other person's world, and as much as possible encourage your patient within the attitudes, values, and practices of that world. This is always complicated, and sometimes impossible, but just as health-related lifestyle changes are most effective when they are culturally sensitive, so are other kinds of big steps in people's lives. Thanks for getting us all to think about such an interesting situation, and for showing such caring and skill in addressing it. Best, Dr. Shapiro

--, I wish we hadn't had to rush through your game, because it clearly deserved more time. The project demonstrated great knowledge mastery, great teaching ability, and great creativity. It was really outstanding. The game format engaged your classmates, and you definitely activated their competitive juices! You were an effective facilitator of this educational exercise, encouraging tentative learners, reinforcing correct answers, and gently redirecting mistaken guesses. Your categories were very original, a stimulating balance of visual, case-based, and humorous. In the way you designed the game, formulated the questions, and explained the answers you also showed the depth of your own learning. This was a truly impressive effort. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Welcome to America! Thank you for sharing something about Norway with us (as you may have discovered, we Americans are pretty insular!); and something about your system of medical education and healthcare. The U.S. is much larger and probably more heterogeneous than Norway; nevertheless, I believe we have much to learn from models that assume healthcare to be a right rather than a commodity that some can afford and some can't; and from models foresighted enough to invest in the country's future by providing free education (even at an advanced level). Hope you've enjoyed your time here and best of luck with the rest of your training. Dr. Shapiro

Hi --, nice to see you again. Thanks for searching out a poem about a very difficult diagnosis (despite the high overall survival rate, it is never easy to hear a diagnosis of cancer) that took a relatively authentic but lighthearted approach. I imagined giving this poem to an (age appropriate) kid, and that kid feeling that she had a framework for thinking about what was happening to her. Also, I could see from your presentation and notes that you did an excellent job of identifying family and sibling issues and coping strategies. You demonstrated impressive awareness of all the many levels (physical, emotional, spiritual, familial, financial, academic etc.) implicated in a cancer diagnosis. Understanding these ramifications is important for the physician, even if she is not directly responsible for addressing all of them.

I also appreciated your empathy for the family in a situation that starts out benign and nonthreatening (knee pain expected to spontaneously resolve) and morphs into every parent's worst nightmare. It's hard to grasp just how quickly a family's world can be

devastated. From the medical perspective, there can be a feeling of ambiguity resolved; from the parents' viewpoint, the multiple often overwhelming challenges are just beginning.

A thoughtful and well-executed project. Thank you! Dr. Shapiro

-- and --, Thanks for having the courage to address the supremely challenging and difficult topic of child abuse. --, I can only try to imagine how difficult it must have been to interview this little kid about the abuse he'd suffered at his mother's hands. What a distortion of both the maternal child relationship and the doctor-patient-parent relationship. As I noted, I very much valued your sensitivity to HIPAA guidelines in protecting your patient's confidentiality during our discussion. Very professional and sensitive. I also appreciated your awareness of the overarching goal during that interview; i.e., to stay on the same side as your patient, to avoid being perceived as the enemy threatening him and his mom.

--, your anecdote about the little guy unwilling to come out of his hospital room, being cajoled by a bunch of white coats, and desperate for the "safety" of his mom, was just heartbreaking. Your insight about how children will often normalize abuse because it is what is familiar to them was excellent, as was your awareness that in these situations the victim often engages in self-blame, while the perpetrator engages in victim-blame ("I wouldn't have hit him if he'd behaved"). Such thinking enables the victim to believe the situation is within his control ("If I behave better mom won't belt me") and the abuser to believe that the violence is justified. A very tragic situation indeed, but an important one to think about. Thanks for helping us all to reflect. Dr. Shapiro

What a joyful, celebratory narrative you created in the voice of a new mom, --. There is a lot of suffering and tragedy in medicine that as a physician, you must learn to face and accept. But there is also a lot of joy, and nothing embodies this better than newborn nursery. As your essay says, life is indeed a miracle. You did a beautiful job of capturing both the happiness and anxiety of the new mom's journey, a true empathy exercise.

Also, congratulations on your wonderful news. I'm happy for you both! Dr. Shapiro

Hi -- and --. What a great project! I was interested in the content you discovered about parents' likes and dislikes of physicians/medical care; but even more I was impressed by your willingness to approach families directly and *ask them*. Just think if you did this occasionally in clinical care! ("So, Senora --, how are you feeling about our interactions? Am I doing anything that upsets you? Is there anything that has been especially helpful?"). I also wanted to comment regarding the concern that sometimes doctors were

too “blunt” in providing information that of course it is important to be clear and unequivocal with patients and families (when that is possible); but that is not the same as being indifferent or harsh. “Bluntness” is often a product of efficiency, because the doctor wants to “move on” to the next task. Putting yourself in the parents’ shoes, problematic medical information about one’s children is always hard to hear. Such communications need to be offered candidly and straightforwardly, but not brusquely. Outstanding project. Dr. Shapiro