

PEDS REFLECTION SESSION 8/6/18,

Kyle Dornhofer, Sung Ji, Daniel Kim, Marissa Lovio

Dear Kyle, Daniel, and Marissa, and Sung, what a great project! It touched deeply on one of the fundamental meta-questions in Pediatrics – parental authority vs. child’s best interests. The case you presented of the unvaccinated 5 mo old with weight loss, fever, and severe eczema and diaper rash was an excellent one, precisely because it was serious but not imminently life-threatening. I was so impressed that, with so many evident red flags (unvaccinated, alternative practitioner, resistance to treatment plan), the team was able to engage them in dialogue and ultimately prevail in having a positive influence on the health of this child. Three days in our current healthcare system is an eternity, and it is wonderful to hear that the team persevered and was successful in winning parental trust, at least to the extent that they allowed their baby to be treated.

Your presentation highlighted many critical issues in trying to resolve situations in which parents and doctors are not always on the same page: 1) the importance of listening and hearing vs. overwhelming parents with information 2) the value of patience and persistence 3) the wisdom of not wasting time undermining a trusted health care practitioner or arguing about what is or isn’t a “fact” 4) knowing what your legal options are should dialogue fail. Ideally, the path to advocating for your little patient lies *through* rather than around the parent. This was an excellent example of taking the long view and how this can ultimately benefit the patient and family unit. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Megan Yetzke, Hyder Said, Allison Hu

This was a really thoughtful and well-researched project that raised a provocative question – how do you balance the religious beliefs of Jehovah Witness parents with the wellbeing, and even the life, of a child? Laying out the legal foundation for intervention was both educational and a useful guide. Providing information on the religious basis for transfusion refusal was also illuminating, and helped us understand how tenaciously these views can be held and what is at stake for a devout believer.

What I most appreciated was the care you (and the attending) took in analyzing the situation and striving to acknowledge the parents’ perspective. Sometimes, there is no alternative but a court order – yet the law is often a blunt instrument. It is far better, when possible, to listen respectfully, to search out a middle way (if viable), and to not impose one’s views coercively.

Of course, when a vulnerable child’s life is at stake, that takes priority; but if you can find common ground to build a way forward, it usually is better for all concerned, as evidenced by the testimonials from mother and daughter in the final case you cited. It doesn’t always work out so well as in these instances, but a patient approach guarantees that you did all you could to find the right balance. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Diane Shu, Shreya Condamoor, Matt Mekany

Dear Diane, Shreya, and Matt, thank you for focusing on a “classic” Peds dilemma – the parent who has not vaccinated their child. You made a great point that not all vaccination lapses are ideological.

As you observed, sometimes it is financial issues, or other priorities. And, although it can be very hard and frustrating, understanding the parents' perspective, and showing kindness and empathy for their concerns and worries, is always the better way to proceed. An attitude of respect, rather than bludgeoning the parents with facts or arguments, maintains an open door; and if there is room for movement, it lays the groundwork for influencing parental convictions. As we discussed in class, finding common ground with parents and figuring out how you can align with them while not abandoning your convictions about what is in the child's best interest gives you the best chance to earn the trust of parents and encourage them to at least consider your point of view.

Finally, I thought you did a great job on the poster itself. The babies were sick, but also so cute that you wanted to learn more about them. Similarly, the flowers and candy-colored objects around the boxes of rather stark information about illnesses and deaths among unvaccinated children would serve to engage parents. Fear can motivate, but too much fear can overwhelm. Your poster struck a sensitive balance. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Edward Choi, Lauren Dedecker

Dear Edward and Lauren, your project identified an under-recognized topic, the importance of attending to the expectant mother's diet during prenatal exams. Lauren, you did a great job of laying out the importance of various nutrients in fetal development. Edward, I was delighted to see that your part of the presentation was not a mere recital of healthy eating habits, but acknowledged the social determinants that make such eating so difficult for many. Providing resource such as OC211 is excellent, and thank you for showing us the site that was easy to navigate and filled with useful options. As we discussed, once we start talk with patients about structural vulnerabilities, it is important to support the patient so that she avoids embarrassment or a sense she is being blamed for her circumstances. I loved the way you took an apparently simple topic – prenatal nutrition – and complicated it in productive and valuable ways. Best, Dr. Shapiro