

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: This is an excellent article, that obviously struck a chord with reviewers. I think both reviewers make good suggestions to make the piece tighter and clearer, and the author should follow them. Reviewer 2 also makes a point about confidentiality. I believe this to be an important issue, and would like to see it addressed in the acceptance letter. I'd like confirmation from the author that this patient could not be identifiable. With that caveat, this is an accept!

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: Dear, many thanks for an article which I believe will resonate with family physicians everywhere. It is a beautifully told story. Please pay attention to reviewer comments, which will serve to tighten and clarify the piece. Reviewer 1's comments about the 3 years time sequence, the "letter sitting," and the regular presentation of the disability are all well-taken, and should be addressed. Also, please consider tinkering with the ending so that the lesson you extracted from navigating this experience is clear. Personally, I'd avoid being too didactic, but perhaps you can say a bit more about those "hard lessons."

Reviewer 2 also makes a critical point about patient confidentiality. You may have already altered the details that concern him/her. If you have not already done so, please consider whether this patient might be identifiable. In the internet age, we must be vigilant on this issue.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR II: This is one of the best submissions we've had; and reflects to my mind the essential components of a strong narrative essay - strong storytelling, showing not telling, a dilemma with which most family docs can identify, and an ending whose ambiguity will provoke discussion (e.g., "What WERE the hard lessons learned?"). Although Reviewer 2 requested a more explicit statement about the specific lessons, I am in sympathy with the author's argument that there were many possible lessons and these should be worked out by the individual reader or through group discussion. The issue of patient confidentiality has been adequately, indeed admirably, addressed. I recommend enthusiastic acceptance.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II: Excellent rewrites that focus the article and make it crisper. I am persuaded by your cogent and thoughtful arguments for an "uninterpreted" ending. Indeed, it should be up to the reader to decide what the "hard lessons" are. Your sharing the piece with the patient and soliciting her response is an admirably transparent approach to the issue of patient confidentiality. All in all, a very engaging, well-told narrative.