

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: John, please look at this one carefully. My tendency would be to reject. I am influenced by XX assessment of this revision, which indicates the author does not seem able to understand - not excuse - the mother's perspective (the author makes a valid point that, since she had almost no contact with the mother, she doesn't know it - however, this is where imaginative empathy can play a role). Along these lines, but of greater concern to me, is the suggestion that the mother was responsible for the child's death. This is never stated in the article, but in my read, it is implied. This seems inappropriate to me especially in the absence of any legal finding of guilt - or even of child abuse (a point made by the second reviewer, who although she recommends "minor revision," still seems to have significant concerns about the article).

The author seems to need to find closure where tragically none exists. She seems to want to blame something or someone (the legal system, the mother) rather than express compassion. The situation described is full of ambiguity and unclarity, but the author appears unwilling to accept this. Therefore I believe it will be hard to extract insight or a "lesson" from the piece.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: You have made a good faith effort to follow reviewer suggestions. However, despite the lack of legal evidence, you seem convinced that the mother was responsible for this child's death. Perhaps this is true, but I feel the need to hold someone responsible limits the value of the article.

ACCEPT WITH REVISION

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: John, please look at this one. The author has addressed reasonably well the reviewers' critiques, although I don't think she is completely able to understand - not excuse - the mother's perspective (she makes a valid point that, since she had almost no contact with the mother, she doesn't know it - however, this is where imaginative empathy can play a role). Along these lines, but of greater concern to me, is the suggestion that the mother was responsible for the child's death. This is never stated in the article, but in my read, it is implied. This seems inappropriate to me, and I have tried to edit out of the ms sentences that seem to point to this conclusion. If the author is willing to accept these changes, and to describe a bit more of how this tragic experience with baby Jane affected her as a physician, I would recommend accepting the article.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: This article is much improved. It is more concise and focused. I liked the way the reader is plunged immediately into the story. Eliminating the introductory paragraph was an excellent choice. I also thought the inclusion of additional details about "mom" such as the second child with spina bifida did help to humanize her. However, I believe the article still needs a little more work. I've attached some suggested edits. In particular, these are my concerns:

- 1) When you say, "Perhaps I should have asked more questions..." I didn't really feel that the questions you posed would have helped baby Jane. Also, the speculations about why mom had brought Jane to clinic did not seem germane. I

- offered alternative questions which might have gotten at mom's stress and her limited coping. You might think of better questions.
- 2) I was troubled that although you say, "Without making accusations..." you are in fact implying an accusation, i.e., that the mother was responsible for abuse that resulted in Jane's death. Given the conclusions of the court, no matter how much you might disagree with them, I don't think it is appropriate to implicate the mother in this way. I therefore edited out those sentences.
 - 3) I thought you could make the point about continuity care more succinctly, again without suggesting that the other care center was negligent (again, when you write something like, "This is not to suggest that the other facilities... were negligent," in fact it suggests precisely that). This is the reason for the next cut.
 - 4) The final cut is because you seem to be returning to the idea that, if Jane had had a placement without contact with the mother, "a safe haven," she would have survived. It seems to me this is simply not knowable, and again points a finger at the mom which under the circumstances is not really justified.
 - 5) Having made these cuts, you now have "extra words" in which to consider the question posed in my earlier comments: How did Baby Jane's death change you as a doctor, and perhaps as a person? It was wonderful that you are pursuing additional training in the area of child abuse and that you have taken on teaching responsibilities in this area. Perhaps you can share with the readers how Baby Jane's death motivated you to take this direction; and how it's changed the way you interact with parents whose children you evaluate to be at risk.