

FM REVIEW 2009-2012 34 COMMENTS TO EDITOR: In my view, this is good narrative essay. It is not didactic, it tells a story. The reader has to do some work - there are ambiguities and unclarities. At first we don't know where we are, what's happening, who's who. I like this. I also like the "abrupt" ending. Indeed, it was by not really "looking at" the patient that the narrator made many erroneous assumptions. The piece is well-written with good characterizations, interesting dialogue, and plenty of rich detail.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR:

1. Clarify setting, and who is the patient, who the visitor. Clarify who is who. Please think about this, as a couple of different reviewers found this beginning confusing. Personally, I was intrigued by the ambiguity of the opening paragraph. However, please consider starting with the dialogue of the second paragraph, and shifting what is now the first paragraph to come before "Where's the patient chart?" This rearrangement might improve the flow.
2. Why does the doctor in the story have a different name? Is that because the narrative is fictionalized? Or because another doctor was taking care of Mr. Steadman? This was confusing for a couple of reviewers.
3. Pg 2, lines 3-4 consider cutting, they sound self-serving.
4. "Sometimes families need help imagining life from the patient's perspective or considering what care the patient might want if they were able to speak for themselves." The irony of the story is that the doctor fails to understand the patient's OR his wives' perspective throughout the story. Is there any way you can highlight that a bit.
5. One editor requested greater clarity regarding the various issues prioritized by doctor, administrators, and nurses. Again, I personally like the way these unfold through the narrative, but please think about a way of emphasizing different perspectives, for example pg. 3, line 56 "It's been much better..." the nurse gushed, her need to maintain an easily managed unit manifestly realized." (i.e., some kind of tag to help establish conflicting priorities).
6. I disagree with reviewers 1 & 2 that the ending is too abrupt. I think it is a little haiku – it says everything essential that's been overlooked up to this point by everyone except Mr. Steadman's wife. However, since both reviewers made this comment, please think about a summary paragraph that elaborates the narrator's insight – amidst the competing needs in that room, no one had really paid attention to patient and family.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR II: This revision addresses almost all reviewer concerns. The scenario described is clearer, as is the dialogue and cast of characters. The ending provides more elaboration and food for thought.

There is one question however, on which I need help that was raised by reviewers and that the author does not directly address. The narrator of the piece is referred to as Dr. Edmunds, whereas the author's name is Sampson. This leads me to believe this is a fictionalized, or partially fictionalized account. Do we publish fiction? Perhaps names have been changed "to protect the innocent." However, before sending a decision letter, I believe we need to seek clarification on this issue, as per my comment below.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II:; this version is substantially improved. The scenario itself and the characters are more clearly delineated, and it is easier to follow what is going on. That's a great point about the chart, and the relative preparedness of family member and physician. I missed that! You also provide an excellent rationale for the original "abrupt" ending of the piece. However, your additional sentences about voice retain the sense of brevity, while pointing the reader in one (possible) fruitful direction.

One issue that you do not address directly were the queries regarding why the narrator is referred to as Dr.XX. Is this because this is a fictionalized account? Could you please clarify whether this is a fictional short story; or a fictionalized narrative in which details have been changed to protect identities of the "characters"? Thank you.