

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: On the whole this is a well-written and powerful essay. One reviewer liked it quite a bit, the other had major criticisms but supported the main message of the article. Like the second reviewer, I can see this piece being useful in teaching situations. I would recommend major revision along the lines suggested by the second reviewer and re-emphasized below.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: Dear, this is a powerful and well-written article. Unfortunately, it describes a far from uncommon situation which of course is terrible for the patient and heartbreaking for the physician.

Please pay careful attention to the recommendations of Reviewer 2. While the format of the dialogue is intriguing and captured the urgency and abruptness of these interactions, it is also sometimes very confusing to figure out who is speaking. Please add a few identifiers and reformat in a way that will be more familiar to readers.

More substantively, please think about the unintended note of coldness/sarcasm that can creep into some of the exchanges you represent. This is particularly evident when the patient keeps responding "you got it, you bet," when his behavior is uncompliant (forgotten list of medications, release of records); when you are shocked to learn he is "getting used" to the cpap machine; the cockroaches on the walls; and when his mom hasn't filled his prescriptions because she "doesn't want to kill him." All these examples, while very familiar to most family docs, can be interpreted as saying that the patient and his family are irresponsible and uninvolved, which I don't believe is your point at all.

One excellent reviewer suggestion to attend to is what you have learned and how this experience might influence how you practice medicine. For example, how might you have intervened with this hearing impaired pt to challenge his sometimes dysfunctional coping mechanism? What outreach could have been done with the mom? Your thoughts along these lines (which might also include systemic changes as well) would go a long way toward showing your empathy for the patient's struggles.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR II: This is one of the best revisions I've seen - the author really dug deep on this one! This is now, in my view, a very powerful article. I recommend acceptance with very minor editorial revisions as indicated on the attached ms.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II: Dear Dr. Cronholm, thanks for this wonderful article. You submitted one of the best revisions I've ever seen, one that really grappled with the issues of tone I and the reviewer raised. Your work completely transformed the occasional unintended patronizing quality to one of humility and self-introspection. This article moved me to tears. It is a heartbreaking yet powerful piece. Great writing and great work!

COMMENTS TO EDITOR III: I recommend acceptance of what turned out to be a great story, touching and authentic. Please note that the author accepts all suggested changes, and has made an additional small, but accurate grammatical correction in the ms. We are ready to proceed with this one.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR III: Thank you again for the obvious effort you expended and your nondefensive attitude in working toward making this the best article possible. It turned out very well!