

## **UNKNOWN HEROES COMMENTS**

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR:** John, my recommendation is that we return this to the author for a major revision based on Dr. XX'S extraordinarily insightful and detailed review. Basically she points out the unexamined assumptions and unconscious biases that may have been at play in the medical team; and highlights patterns of communication that inevitably discriminate against the deaf. The author cannot change these things, but he can address some of his own limitations and those of the team. I spell out some of this below.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR:** Dear, this is a touching story about the kind of person who is often ignored in busy hospitals. Helping us to see beyond the uniform, and understand the crucial role he plays in his family system is an important lesson.

Although the story is about X, and appropriately so, reviewer 1 expresses many well-founded concerns about unexamined assumptions and unconscious biases toward the deaf community. Please consider her comments carefully, and try to address them. Most troubling is how communication patterns marginalized the deaf parents and retained the centrality of the adult son. I agree that more awareness of this issue would improve the article in terms of how communication barriers can complicate care for patient, family members, and physicians. By noting possible limitations of the team in caring for the family, you will also avoid a slightly condescending tone which occasionally creeps in and which I know is not the intention of the piece.

A few smaller points: 1) Please use a term other than "mute," as it reinforces certain stereotypes. It was unclear whether the father was unable to communicate, or could "speak" with his hands. 2) Please delete the hairbrush anecdote, unless it is based on actual information, as it portrays the mother in a potentially abusive role. 3) It does seem strange that the mother and sister are unnamed. Should this be rectified?  
4) Please acknowledge that your own communication limitations might have restricted your ability to know all that John's son (or his father) could express.

Although gleaning John's story is a wonderful example of family medicine at its best, you might be able to be more concise in recounting some of the details you collected - the brother's death, the sister's alcoholism. I understand the point you are making about John's unassuming heroism, but perhaps this information could be presented more succinctly (p. 2-4 could easily be tightened without losing the narrative flow).