

FM REVIEW COMMENTS 2013 3

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: As reviewer 2 notes, this is an exceptionally well-written essay that tells a common story in a unique way. I agree with reviewer 1 that the ending section is a bit didactic and preachy, and that the final line is too cliched. I'm recommending minor revisions along the lines reviewer 2 notes (minus the recommendations about science, philosophy, religion, and clinical practice, which we do not have the room to permit the author to develop; and which are not really appropriate anyway in a narrative essay).

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: As reviewer 2 notes, this is a beautifully written essay that tells a familiar story about the importance of compassion in clinical practice in a new and striking way.

The only part of the essay that falls a bit flat is the ending section, starting with Know This. This phrase comes across as a bit didactic and preachy. You are not commanding compassion, you are inviting all beings, including yourself, to remember and try to engage in compassion. So perhaps there is a gentler way to say this that includes you as well.

The next line "every person..." might benefit from being tied back more directly to patient care. The next line "Combining compassion..." I think is strong and to the point. The next line could probably be cut, this is something we all know and again sounds a bit preachy. The next line "Being doctors..." seems off point to me, although it is quite accurate in itself. The next line "We are vessels" and what follows "This chain..." strikes me as the essence of what you are trying to say, and both link back perfectly to the opening mind exercise. These are exceptionally lovely and moving.

The concluding line "What could be more rewarding?" seems somewhat trite, but you do need a conclusion after "This chain..." Try to rework this last section so that it echoes your beautifully crafted line about doctors being vessels (and notice here that in these sentences you have switched from the implicit 2nd voice command "(You) Know this!" to the first person plural, much, much better). Write a paragraph that is true to this theme and you will have a magnificent essay here.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR II: This started out as a wonderful submission, and has only gotten better. It is beautifully written, and expresses a message about compassion that is at the heart of family medicine. It also contains a lovely patient-centered story. The author did an outstanding job of revising the paper as well. I strongly recommend accepting this piece, it is one of the best we've received.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II: Thank you for these revisions. They are excellent, and completely address the concerns about language and tone. The last section still retains the larger contextual frame regarding compassion, while also being very moving (and not at all preachy). It is a truly beautiful piece that embodies humanism without wearing it on its sleeve.