

FM REVIEW COMMENTS 2013 8

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: This is an excellent story, unfortunately told in a rather prosaic manner. I'd really like it for the journal, but I'd like to see it rewritten in a more involving, more personal way. In this regard, my reaction is much closer to reviewer #1 than to reviewer #2, who enjoyed the writing pretty much as is. I'm recommending that the author try for a more creative approach.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: This is a wonderful story that says something profound about the essence of healing. Everyone who read it was moved by it. The problems, such as they are, lie not in the story but in the telling. We'd like to suggest a major rewrite along the lines suggested by reviewer 1. Specifically, consider focusing on two aspects of the story:

1) The beginning. As reviewer 1 notes, the beginning is rather boring. What if you were to start by describing the concert performed by Marinela and Mr. M, and then say something like, "This concert was especially meaningful to me because it was not only two violinists, but a doctor and a patient, whose long-term relationship taught me an important lesson about doctoring" (or words to that effect).

2) The relative absence of the author (you!) until the very last paragraph makes the story less engaging and powerful than it might be. As reviewer 1 suggests, think about how you can bring yourself in more. How were you affected by that concert? What were your thoughts and feelings as you learned about Marinela's relationship with this patient? Certainly you have had patients like Mr. M. How has your treatment of such patients differed from Marinela's and what did that difference say to you? Again, these are just possibilities, the main point is to show a little more of yourself throughout the essay. Then the final paragraph will read like a summing up, rather than a surprise guest appearance of the author.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR II: The author has made a valiant effort here. The writing is still somewhat pedestrian, but the essay overall does read a bit better, and I have also edited this version for the author's consideration. The two main problems were that the opening paragraph did not engage the reader; and more importantly, that the author himself was largely invisible, with the main focus of the narrative being on the unconventional relationship around violin-playing that developed between a village doctor and her patient. The author has now written a noticeably improved first paragraph that really draws in the reader; and has also added a bit about his own feelings in response to witnessing doctor and patient playing a concert; and expanded how learning about this doctor and patient has altered his view of clinical practice. I think he could do a little more in this regard, as I indicate below. I recommend minor revision.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II: Thank you for all your revisions. The opening paragraph, as I hope you will agree, is much more engaging and quickly draws the reader in to this story about the two violinists. Discovering that they are in fact doctor and patient makes the reader want to learn more.

You have also done a good job of making yourself more present. You've expressed clearly and movingly how hearing their music and learning their story affected you. However, I think you could do a bit more in this regard. Specifically, in the final paragraph, please say more about how you translate the "concept" of shared doctor-patient violin-playing into your own practice (since you don't play the violin :-)). What do you do to share nonmedical experiences with your patients? Do you make it a point to talk to them more about their lives? Do you actively search for common ground (a love of fishing, 60s rock music etc.)? Do you consider "prescribing" reading a good book, seeing a relevant movie, or listening to music? Show us how learning about Marinela and Mr. M has changed you as a physician (even if in very small ways).

Finally, I've taken the liberty of editing your essay slightly. Some of the writing itself struck me as awkward (telling the story of Marinella and Mr. M all in the present tense was not so much involving as uncomfortable to read). Also, there still seemed to be too much detail about this pair, interesting as they are. The heart of the story is really how their unconventional relationship affected you.

Please consider working one more round with these suggestions. I think they will improve the wonderful story you have to tell.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR III: The author has worked hard on this essay, and has conscientiously attempted to make it more personal (rather than simply a recounting of an interaction between another physician and her nontraditional treatment of her patient). While the writing remains rather standard, the story of the violin-playing doctor-patient duo is quite touching; and also clearly caused this young physician to expand his notions of clinical care. I think it is about as good as it can be made; and I recommend accepting it.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR III: Thank you for the effort you've expended on this essay. It's certainly made a difference! The essay reads more fluidly now. There is also a better balance between Dr. Marinela's story and your own; and it is easier to see how the example of the violin-playing duo inspired you to develop more personal knowledge of your patients. All in all, this is a touching and engaging story, and I believe it will help readers to reassess their own approaches to patients.