

FM REVIEW Comments 2013 14

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: This is an unusual and deeply personal story that I think might be of interest to readers after extensive revision. Fortunately, reviewers have provided many hints and suggestions about how such a revision should be approached. I recommend the author be given a chance to significantly revise this piece so that its message is clearer.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: Dear Dr. thank you for this deeply honest and transparent sharing of aspects of your personal journey in family medicine. I agree with the reviewers that there are important insights and lessons here, but although you disclose much to your readers, there are still points of confusion and opaqueness. Reviewer 1 puts it very well: "Is the message that family practice somehow saved you?" If so, that's a powerful message, but you need to show HOW that happened. How did you get from being dismissed from your FM residency to where you are now? What was this transformation and how did it occur? I think this is the heart of your story, and you could reveal it more while trimming a bit from the earlier crash-and-burn examples (think about summarizing the downward spiral beginning with your father's death, leaving the surgical residency, and ending with the FM dismissal). Readers will be more interested in understanding what eventually changed for you, and how this happened. How have you become the physician - and person - you are today, and how did family medicine facilitate this (if it did)? Along similar lines, as Reviewer 2 notes, you say your life and views are now "so different" from what they were, but in what way? Furthermore, why has medical education become such a passion for you? These are the kinds of questions that need to be addressed in the essay.

Please attend to the specific suggestions of reviewers, who both made extremely thoughtful and helpful comments to improve the essay. Also pay attention to grammatical issues, especially the incomplete sentences in the second paragraph. As well, I don't think the title quite makes sense. I think you mean something like "humbling life experiences lead to humility". Please consider reworking. And despite all the questions raised, you still need to keep the essay around 1,000 words.

I read this as a story of hope and impressive personal/professional development, one that can be inspiring to readers. You just need to craft the essay a bit more to allow its insights to stand forth.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR II: The author has clearly put in a great deal of effort to revise his manuscript, taking into consideration the comments and suggestions of reviewers and assistant editor. This version is better written, has a clearer focus, and tells his story in a straightforward and therefore moving manner. I've made several suggestions to further improve the ms, and recommend that the author make the minor revisions suggested below.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II: Dear Dr. thank you for this extensive revision. This is a much-improved manuscript, and it tells a powerful and moving story. The change in title is excellent, thank you. Also, the concluding two paragraphs are touching and authentic.

The second to last acknowledges the many helping hands extended to you along the way; and the final paragraph reads like a personal oath of commitment to both society and medicine.

I am attaching an edited version with suggestions and comments that I think will make your final version more readable and more compelling.

In addition to minor grammatic and editorial changes, please think about the following:

- 1) When you talk about your father's illness and death, the word "helpless" seems inadequate to describe your feelings. Think about digging a little deeper. Similarly, the switch to 2nd person seems to distance you from this tragic event. I'd recommend keeping your writing in 1st person.
- 2) I know you're trying to keep within the word limit, please please say a few words about WHY you liked family medicine as a medical student. We need to see that your choice to pursue this specialty was not an arbitrary or expedient decision.
- 3) Figure out how to express the differences between surgeons and family docs more clearly, but in a way that is not insulting to surgeons.
- 4) Consider sharing something of your own feelings when you were dismissed from your FM residency. Were you ashamed? Resentful? Did you fear the assessment of you as not worthy to be a doctor might be right?
- 5) I still have trouble with the lack of transition from dismissed by two residencies to successful, respected doc. I realize that you attempt to explain this in the second to last paragraph, which is quite good. However, please provide a few more explanatory details. Another residency must have given you a second chance? How was that experience different from your first two residencies? How did you manage your depression? Did you take any specific steps to cope with your anger, or to work to cultivate a more humble attitude? I ask these questions not to pry into your life, but to help readers understand how you got from point A to point B. Show us what changed.

Thank you again for taking the risk to share this story with others in family medicine. I'm sure it will speak to many.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR III: The author has done a valiant job of revising this manuscript not once but twice. It is a moving testament to the author's dramatic personal and professional growth, as well as the helping hands extended to him along his journey. I think we should accept pending one more round of minor recommendations detailed below and in the attachment which I have lightly revised. I'm also recommending a change in title.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR III: Dear Dr., thank you for all the work your expended on this very moving essay. I approve all the changes you've made (including taking out the line about surgeons), and agree that para 7 works very well as a transition.

You're almost there. I've made a few very minor suggestions in the attached version, which I hope will be acceptable to you. Specifically, I recommend removing exclamation points, and adding a few explanatory phrases (such as being given a second chance in

family medicine, 3rd para from end). I also deleted the phrase that you are a "well-respected physician." It's not necessary for you to state this, it is evident in the context of the essay.

Finally, I am still not entirely satisfied with the title of the piece. I'm not sure that your point is that family medicine is a forgiving specialty - I don't know exactly what this would mean. What would you think of "Finding Forgiveness and Purpose in Family Medicine"? This would be more personal and certainly true in your case.

Thanks again for all your effort. I think you have shared a brave and inspiring story that will give hope to the many physicians who, like yourself, struggle with challenges and are able to overcome them.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR IV: In rereading this well-worked over essay, I found a very redundant line (see below). My mistake for not catching it earlier. My recommendation is that we should accept the essay (this is its third revision!), but that the author hopefully will be willing to make this final recommended cut, which is very trivial. He and I have labored over this piece until I think we are both a bit blind to it. I hope that he will accept this suggestion readily and we can all move forward.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR IV: Dear Dr. Thank you for accepting the title change, and the minor revisions I suggested.

Please accept my apologies for not catching this earlier, but we must request two additional small changes. In paragraph 3 from the end, the last two sentences read "My patients deserved the best I could offer! As a result I have enjoyed a rewarding career." The next paragraph begins "As a result of my being given a second chance in family medicine, I have enjoyed a rewarding career." Can you please remove the exclamation mark after "offer" and simply delete the next sentence. This eliminates the unnecessary exclamation as well as the redundancy.

With this correction, I think we can both agree this is the best possible essay it can be! Thank you again for your patience with this process.