

FM REVIEW 2013 31 COMMENTS

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: This essay highlights an excellent topic, i.e., the unconscious (or gratuitous) cruelty of unconsidered speech. However, there is too much wrong with the essay to warrant revision. In particular, the example around which the essay is based is the statement of a nurse, so the result is an essay in which a physician is basically taking a nurse to task for HER insensitivity. If the author would like to address the same subject matter but using an entirely different approach that focuses on HIMSELF, I think such an essay could be considered.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: This is a superb topic that deserves attention. Unfortunately, this essay as written does not really do the subject justice. As reviewer 2 points out, there is a confusing discrepancy in the examples, as the reader bounces around from authorial verbal missteps with your children and being on the receiving end of insensitive comments; to unconscious physician bias introduced (perhaps) by Big Pharma advertising and your own assumption about the absence of a father in the delivery room; culminating in a truly appalling comment by a nurse. This points out another troubling (although no doubt unintentional) incommensurability in the examples offered. The physician makes an ill-considered remark about a pimple on his daughter's nose; the nurse callously depreciates the dying patient's suffering. The result is an essay in which you, a physician, basically take a nurse to task for HER insensitivity. Because the example is hearsay, the analysis can come across as second-guessing and judgmental. The focus of the narrative essays should be personal reflection and sharing. An approach that honestly examined your own linguistic missteps with patients from the amusing to the devastating would be much more compelling.