

## **FM REVIEW 2013 36 COMMENTS**

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR:** I would like to give the author an opportunity to work on this submission. The reviewers were not very enthusiastic, but at least one thought it had potential. I make some specific recommendations below.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR:** This poem describes a not uncommon experience for third year medical students, i.e., an encounter with a patient in which they discover that, despite their short white coat, the patient regards them as his/her "doctor." We like the poetic acknowledgment of this phenomenon, which often reassures confused and lost third years that they indeed can make a difference in their patients' lives.

However, the poem as written needs some work. The last stanza in particular seems insufficient. Reviewer 1 suggests providing more about the student's emotional reaction to learning he was "su medico" as well as about how the team treated this patient such that he only trusted the student. This is certainly one way to go. Perhaps, following both reviewers, you could find more vivid language and imagery that could bring this situation to life. Right now the experience is documented, but it does not touch the reader as strongly as it might.

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR II:** I am struggling with this poem. The author has done a conscientious job of attempting to respond to the suggestions of reviewer 1. Unfortunately, I think this has made matters worse. Reviewer 2 is pretty much on track when she criticizes the writing as plain and uninteresting. The additional stanzas in my view have only made the poem more cumbersome. I've taken a stab at revising the poem, but I'm not very satisfied that these changes actually improve the submission. Nevertheless, because everyone is trying so hard, I'd recommend giving the author another chance to make an important rite of passage for many third year medical students into a good poem.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II:** Thank you for conscientiously attempting to address the concerns of reviewer 1. The added stanzas do provide some insight into your reactions at discovering YOU are the patient's doctor, but in this version there is considerable redundancy between stanzas 4 and 6. Also, your list of adjectives describing your reaction is more telling than showing. Poetry thrives on vivid images and interesting use of language. In the attached revision, I've tried to hone two of the images that struck me - your responding to the page of (in my imagining) a somewhat exasperated intern; and your moving to the bedside of your patient, symbolizing the assumption of responsibility. I offer these suggestions more to encourage you to rethink the poem a bit than as prescriptions to follow literally. Bottom-line, this poem seems to me to be almost a kind of haiku: i.e., it should be as short as possible (but following Einstein, no shorter :-)) and organized around the central moment when you realized you were this patient's doctor. Following these guidelines, a lot about the patient's history and other details can then be omitted. I think with a little more work, the gem will emerge from the surrounding stone.

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR III:** Dr. has put a great deal of thought and effort into this poem. In my view, he's taken it as far as it can go. He has accepted some recommended

changes and rejected others, but clearly wrestled with all issues raised about the poem. As written, the poem presents an important rite of passage of every medical student - the moment they take ownership of a patient and become "the doctor" - and I think readers will resonate to his description, which adds the richness of a cross-cultural encounter to the mix. I recommend accepting this poem as written.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR III:** Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of my suggestions. As noted, they were meant to spur your thinking, and it looks like they did! I like this version. And I've always liked the topic of the poem - the rite of passage every medical student experiences the moment they take ownership of a patient and become "the doctor." I think readers will recognize this important turning point, and appreciate the richness of its occurring within a cross-cultural encounter. Thanks for your work on this poem.