

## FM REVIEW 2014 13 COMMENTS

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR:** This is a well-written essay about the value of home visits and the way in which they help "pass the torch" of the spirit of family medicine to residents, the future of the specialty. I agree more with reviewer 1, who was moved and inspired by the piece. Reviewer 2 recommended reject, and felt the essay did not develop either of its themes in a way that allowed the reader to understand why these encounters were so meaningful, either for the patients, the residents, or the narrator. Although my view is that this review is too harsh, it does raise valuable suggestions, which I encourage the author to address.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR:** This is a lovely essay about the value of home visits and the importance of acculturating residents to their value. While we recognize that the length limits of this column do not allow for in-depth exposition, it would improve the essay if it provided a little more insight on the following points (following suggestions of reviewer 2):

1) Help the reader understand your relationship to the patient's son (who was also your patient) in the first anecdote. How did your long relationship help you understand the interaction you describe? Did you feel all the details about his dead dog were anticipatory grief for the mom? Was he more interested in his dog than his mom? What was the value of this visit for him, for her, for you, for your resident? Since one of your points is the importance of passing the home visit torch to the next generation, it is especially important that we get some insight into how the visit affected her.

2) Similarly for the second anecdote, can you provide some hint of what this visit meant to family, you, and especially to the resident? Perhaps he made a comment afterwards that illuminated the impact of the experience?

3) Your honesty about how hard it is to make time for home visits is commendable, and will resonate with most busy family docs. The anecdote about your daughter is truly beautiful - very touching, and captures the idea that home visits, while hard to schedule, are beneficial not only for patient but for physician. Perhaps, in your reflection, you can make that point a bit more explicit.

4) The last paragraph about the new generation of physicians would be more compelling if you had established earlier with more depth what the residents gleaned from these visits, how it shaped them as family physicians.

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR II:** In my view, this revision does not do an adequate job of addressing the reviewer's or my concerns. She has added a lot of details about the son and the patient in the first anecdote, but these do little to illuminate her (the physician's) relationship with each. She notes she attended the funeral, which is a lovely gesture, but says nothing about what this meant to her. More importantly, although I read the essay as about the importance of "passing the home visit torch" to a new generation of family docs, there is almost no indication of what these home visits meant to the residents that accompanied the author. Overall, the essay falls short in terms of reflection on the events she describes. I will attempt to provide clearer guidelines for how the author needs to rewrite this piece.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II:** Thank you for the many interesting details you've provided in your revision, especially about the son and his mother in the first anecdote. You clearly knew both of them well. However, unfortunately these revisions do not fully address the concerns of the reviewer and assistant editor. We invite you to go back to the drawing board and see if you can clarify the points below.

1) You seem to have two main points in the essay, both wonderful ones. The first point is that home visits are very meaningful to you, such that you have always made time for them, even having your daughter accompany you when she was little (a very touching story). You need to show a little more of yourself and a little less of the son and his mom in the first anecdote in order to convey this point. Organize the portrait you create of your patient and her son more deftly, and you will have space to reflect on how you felt about them. You can do something similar when you note you attended the funeral - talk about not just the fact that you went, but WHY you went and what it meant to you. Bring yourself into both home visits more, not just what you did, but how you felt and what the visits meant to you.

2) The other point it seems you are making is the "passing of the home visit torch" to a new generation of family docs. Therefore, it is disappointing that there is almost no insight into how the home visits affected these residents. We see that they conducted themselves professionally, even selflessly, but we need more understanding of what the visits meant to them in shaping their professional identity as family physicians. If these particular residents did not comment specifically on what they learned from these experiences, perhaps you can reflect on your interactions with other residents to show more explicitly the value of home visits in forming their family medicine identity. Similarly, when you wonder whether you should have invited the resident to attend the funeral please explain WHY this might have been important (i.e., closing the circle, allowing her to grieve etc.).

3) The first anecdote has gotten very long (we understand you were attempting to address reviewer concerns, and we do appreciate the window into this son and mother). However, you can create a thumbnail sketch of these patients and their longstanding relationship with you, and then move on to the heart of the matter: this particular home visit. The anecdote about the dog's ashes is wonderful, and in my view should be the core of this encounter, but please reflect on what this MEANT. As was asked previously, was this anticipatory grief? What did you think about this rather strange interaction? What did the resident think? We don't need to know every aspect of patient and son's lives, just a few telling specifics that are relevant to your story.

4) The second anecdote is not very involving. What is the point you are making in commenting that the wife greets you as a neighbor? Is it that home visits change the boundaries between doctors, patients, and families? Again, bring yourself more into the anecdote. Did you like that she used your first name? Is there a sense of pride about your resident making "free" visits to monitor the patient?

5) In both anecdotes, please consider why you are including a specific detail, and how it supports and enhances the main points you are making. This might help you discriminate which to keep and which to eliminate.

6) There is some inconsistency between past and present tense. Writing in the present tense can be very powerful. However, please make sure that the tense changes are not distracting.

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR III:** This essay is a paean to the value of the home visit, and the importance of passing along this aspect of family medicine to the next generation of doctors. It is an essay I'd very much like to see in the journal. This revision is an improvement over the last one, which lacked focus and clarity. The author has, I believe, figured out what she wants to say, and says it through two really nice patient anecdotes.

There are several typos, stylistic, and minor grammatical issues. Once these are corrected, we should be able to accept the article.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR III:** Thank you for this revision. The way I read the essay now, it is focused on the value of home visits and the "passing-the-torch" to family docs in training. The essay achieves its goals very well. Both anecdotes are now more succinct, without having lost their meaning. The perspectives of the two residents is also well-drawn.

I recommend a few minor changes:

1) I would remove the phrase "mama's boy." (p.1, line 17). The word has some negative connotations that you probably are not intending.

2) P. 1, line 31, sounds better if you just say "...followed him in" (delete "side" as it sounds repetitive with "outside")

3) P 1, line 38, should be "woman's"

4) P 1, line 42, delete "to" maybe add "finally"

5) P 1, line 51 "she told me she found the encounter enlightening..." delete and say "she told me the encounter was enlightening because..." eliminating the repetitive construction "she found." Just stylistic.

6) P 1, line 16, "complimented"

7) P. 2, line 26 substitute "be" for "become his doctor." Again, just stylistic.

8) The shift to the past tense makes the essay easier to read. Be sure this is consistent throughout the essay, specifically in the second home visit anecdote (p.3, lines 29, 42-45).

9) P 3, line 49. Is there another word you could find for the way the resident described the visit? The first resident also used the term "enjoyable," which if it's what they both said is what they said. It's kind of a bland term however. Could you legitimately substitute satisfying, worthwhile?

10) P 4, line 1. Consider cutting "And so he..." and replace with "This resident..."

Rest of the essay now reads beautifully. Last line is perfect!

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR IV:** The author has made most of the requested changes. There are still a few stylistic/spelling corrections which I've made on the attached. In one place, the author neglected to make the tense of the paragraph consistent with the rest of the essay. A few other sentences did not flow well or were excessively long, so I've modified them slightly. I think these changes rise to the level where the author should approve them; but beyond that, the essay is ready to be accepted and published.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR IV:** Thank you for your patience with the revision process. I know we both want the same thing, which is to make this the best essay possible. In rereading the manuscript, I noticed a few very minor issues that required attention. One was that the paragraph about the second resident's home visit was still in the present tense, although the essay now has a straightforward chronology and I believe it makes more sense for this to be in the past tense. In addition, a couple of sentences did not flow well or were excessively lengthy, so I've taken the liberty of modifying them slightly. I hope you will approve of these small changes. Otherwise, the essay reads very well, and is a lovely tribute to the value of home visits and the importance of conveying this to the next generation of family doctors.

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR V:** This essay has gone through a lot of revisions to bring it to a level that merits publication, but in my view it is finally there. As is often the case, it addresses a topic of great importance in family medicine - the value of the home visit - but struggled to construct a coherent and engaging narrative. The author has worked very hard and has been responsive to both reviewer and asst editor feedback. Please note a few minor typos that should be corrected:

p. 1 line 38 "women's" should be "woman's"

p. 1 line 51 "that she found the encounter enlightening..." should read "that the encounter was enlightening..."

p. 1 line 52 should be a period after "office."

p. 2 line 35 please insert "a" before "friend and neighbor"

p. 2 line 43-44 should read "...due a serious, thoughtful young physician" Note correct placement of comma

p. 2 line 45 delete "goes", retain "went"

p. 3 line 11 "has continued" (delete "s")

p. 3 line 15 I believe quotation mark should go before "the": "the young doctor is coming..."

**Otherwise, ready to go.**

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR V:**

**Thank you for putting so much effort into the many rewrites requested through the editorial process. I hope you agree that the final result is an excellent essay that should inspire other residency directors and faculty to include home visits in their training programs.**