

## FM REVIEW 2014 18 COMMENTS

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR:** This is a well-written story about encountering whites-only treatment rooms in a hospital in the 1970s. Both reviewers liked it, but felt it did not say or do enough, and I agree. The story needs more reflection on how the dual racial system affected the author at the time; how things have changed (or not); and the effect of this (and similar) experience(s) on the author's professional trajectory. I recommend major revision.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR:** This is a well-written and compelling essay about encountering racial disparities during your training in the 1970s. However, for the purposes of the journal's narrative essays, it does not go far enough. In consonance with the two reviewers, I would like to hear a bit less about the tunnels (although the historical resonance back to the Confederacy is powerful and should certainly be retained), and a bit more about how training in a racially segregated situation influenced your relationships with black and white patients; and, as reviewer 1 wonders, to what extent you (and others) "went along" with the racially separate system in place. It would also be helpful to hear your reflections on how things have changed (or not); and to understand how this aspect of your training influenced your career trajectory. Basically, the essay needs to show the political through the personal. With attention to these questions, this essay can help readers better grasp how we have all been implicated in issues of race in this country - and still are. Please pay special attention to Reviewer 1's comments.

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR II:** This essay is an interesting account of the author's first encounter with institutionalized racism and how it affected her subsequent career in public health. The author has conscientiously attempted to address concerns of reviewers and asst editor, but in my view the essay still falls short. I have attempted to address clumsy writing in the attached edited version. I have also encouraged the author to reflect more deeply and personally about how this early experience shaped her development as a physician.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II:** Thank you for attempting to address the concerns of reviewers and asst editor. In particular additions you made help to humanize this long-ago patient; and give some sense of how this early experience influenced your future career. There remain some stylistic difficulties. The attached revision suggests ways in which these could be resolved. You are not obligated to accept these wholesale, but if you do not like the suggestion, please find another way to address the problem.

The final paragraph, which I recognize you wrote in response to a reviewer's desire for you to "connect the dots" between past and present, still falls a little flat. Can you find a way to show a little more about yourself now, the doctor you've become and the kind of medicine you practice. Did that early experience make you determined to seek a career in public health? Did you decide that you wanted to be an advocate for vulnerable and marginalized patients? Your talk of respect and values, while noble, is somewhat abstract. Help us link that powerless young medical student to who you are today. In this paragraph, I added a line about the "despicability of racism" that borrows heavily from

a statement you made in your response letter. You may not wish to include this line, but please consider how to make the paragraph more personal and therefore more compelling.

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR III:** This essay, about encountering racism in the 1970s and how it shaped one physician's career, now reads well. I could wish for more reflection and self-awareness, but I don't think these will be forthcoming from this author. Because of the value of the topic and because of the sincere effort put forth by the writer, I recommend acceptance, with very minor revisions as indicated below.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR III:** Thank you for your conscientious work on the essay. I still wish you could show a little more about how this early experience influenced you. (i do like the addition of the concluding sentence). Could you add a line about how you saw public health as a way to take a stand against racism and unequal access in the healthcare system (your own words, but showing a line from this incident in Cobalt to who you are today)? In terms of editing, we would like you to approve the very minor stylistic changes noted in the attachment. Thank you for this valuable contribution to the journal.

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR IV:** The author (and I) have taken this essay about as far as it can go. The essay has gone through three re-writes and I don't think can benefit from further effort. The author has worked very hard to craft a poignant essay about how a long-ago instance of institutionalized healthcare racism affected a young medical student, and influenced her subsequent career path. We see very few submissions that even address the intersection of healthcare and racism, yet this perspective deserves representation in our journal. For this reason, and in recognition of the ways in which the author has improved and focused the essay, I recommend acceptance and publication.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR IV:** Thank you for your revisions and additional minor changes. Importantly, this essay reminds us we are not that many years separated from overtly institutionalized racism; and its ugly shadow still lingers in too many aspects of patient care. I appreciate your patience in working on the essay, and hope you feel, as do I, that the end result is a more accessible and more poignant manuscript.