

FM REVIEW 2015 31 Comments

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: This essay recounts heroic efforts made by hospital staff in the face of the Fukushima nuclear disaster. Although both reviewers liked the essay very much, neither of them seemed to understand the parameters of a narrative essay, with the result that their recommendations on the whole are better suited to a special article. One suggestion which does have merit is to have the authors provide a little more background about the event. The problem I have with the essay is that, with the exception of the final paragraph which is beautiful, it is written in a very detached, analytic style. Nevertheless, I agree that the article should be accepted once minor stylistic revisions have been made.

Also, the author deserves an apology for the length of time this ms has been in review. (I have already corresponded with him on this score personally). By way of explanation, but not excuse, I found someone who seemed an ideal reviewer (he was a Japanese professor of family medicine), who kept assuring me he would do the review, he was eager to do the review etc. - and then never followed through, despite my extending his deadline.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: This is an important essay that pays tribute to the "unsung heroes" at your hospital who chose to serve others despite unimaginable personal hardship. I offer the following comments only in the spirit of strengthening the essay so that it conveys as effectively as possible the amazing events that transpired at Sumo hospital.

Please ignore the following reviewer recommendations: a) The narrative essay section does not use abstracts, so no need to provide one b) This section of the journal does not include tables or figures, so please do not prepare these.

There are many informative and valuable articles that could be written about the Fukushima disaster. The important thing to remember about the narrative essay section is that it is supposed to tell a personal story: What was it like for you and your colleagues as you faced this terrible disaster? What did you learn and how did it change you? We understand that your goal is to recognize the heroic efforts of nurses, dieticians, technicians, patients and others, but anything you can do to humanize the events you witnessed will bring the essay more in line with the intention of the section. For example, the anecdote about the young nurse who returns on her own after she and her family were evacuated is very compelling. You might look for other places where a brief personal story could bring the narrative to life.

Please also attend to the following suggestions:

- 1) As reviewer 2 suggests, it might be helpful to provide one succinct paragraph at the start of the essay reminding readers of the nature and scope of the Fukushima catastrophe.
- 2) Please try writing in the first person (singular or plural) as much as possible. This will make the essay more immediate, and will also avoid passive grammatical constructions.
- 3) Try to find language that is simple and direct rather than formal and professional. The concluding paragraph is a beautiful and touching example of this kind of writing.
- 4) Please include a few more personal anecdotes about dieticians, technicians, or patients.
- 5) Please remember that, despite revisions, the essay must still remain around 1000 words.

Thank you for sharing this story with our journal. We also thank you for your patience with the review process, and apologize for the long wait before receiving an editorial decision. We feel confident that, with some revision, the essay will make an important contribution by reminding our readers of what it looks like when people come together in the service of others, overcoming their own fears and unimaginable hardship.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR II: This essay seeks to celebrate the "unsung heroes" - nurses, dieticians, technicians, office workers, cleaning staff - who made it possible for the Soma General Hospital to remain open during the Fukushima disaster. The problem I have with the essay is that it is written in a very objective, impersonal style which makes what should be a very moving story distant and uninvolved. The author emphasizes the value of maintaining order, doing one's duty, and fulfilling one's professional role. While undeniably important, in my view this emphasis does not do justice to the altruistic choices people made under unimaginably difficult circumstances. Since I conveyed this in my earlier feedback to the author, I suspect that cultural differences may explain the author's approach. I also requested more personal stories, which the author refused saying (very understandably) that these were simply too painful to revisit. I am willing to respect this boundary, but I would like to try once more to move the essay beyond duty and order to recognition of the humanism and compassion enacted by all these people.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II: Thank you for adding an introductory paragraph reminding readers of the Fukushima disaster. It's sad that it should be necessary, but it seems like a good idea. Thank you also for relying more on the first person voice.

In terms of the other editorial requests, I understand and respect your decision not to include personal stories because of the pain they still evoke. (In that vein, I did not think that the brief anecdote about the electronic kitchen was very illuminating, and suggest deleting this).

At the risk of being presumptuous, I would like to urge you once more to expand your praise of these "unsung heroes" to go beyond duty, order, and fulfillment of professional roles. I agree with you that these qualities are important, and were certainly in play in staff decision's to remain with the hospital; but it seems to me that so much more underlay these incredible decisions. Your prioritizing of duty, order, and role-fulfillment may be evidence of a cultural difference between our two

countries, but I think it would enable an American readership to connect more immediately with the heroism demonstrated if, in addition to noting these values, you also acknowledged the altruism, self-sacrifice and compassion that emerged from the fellow-feeling these workers had toward others' suffering. Doing so is not reliant on personal stories that are still too painful to tell; but would simply enlarge our readership's appreciation that such behavior is not based only on a desire to establish order and do one's duty, but also out of caring and love for others.

If you disagree with the above, you are the teller of this story, and ultimately it is your choice how to tell it. I am simply asking that you think about making minor modifications along the lines indicated in the attached document, which to my mind make those whom you wish to praise even more heroic.

Thank you for your consideration.