

## FM REVIEW 2016 35 COMMENTS

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR:** This is a beautifully written and moving essay about learning to accept the limits of medicine - what the author calls "unwinnable hands." Both reviewers liked it a lot, and I agree. It is quite long (almost 500 words over the 1000 word limit), so I've asked the author to make some cuts. The essay also contains an anecdote that puts a nurse in a pejorative light, and I've asked the author to consider recasting this as well. This is one of the better crafted essays we've received this year. It also knows exactly what it wants to say and weaves together its various strands seamlessly. It will make a strong contribution to the journal.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR:** Thank you for this excellent piece. The essay is skillfully crafted, it knows exactly what it wants to say and weaves together its various strands seamlessly. We would very much like to see the essay in our journal, and have only a few small suggested revisions.

1) Unfortunately, the essay exceeds the section length limit by 461 words. While we have a little flexibility on this score, please revise to bring it closer to the 1000 word maximum. I have suggested a few possible deletions, and hopefully you will be able to identify more.

2) The anecdote about the nurse, while powerful, also puts this nurse in a very bad light (which perhaps she deserves). However, is there a way you can show a bit more empathy toward her? Perhaps she was burned out; perhaps she had forgotten how to grieve?

Your essay contains moving insights about recognizing the limits of medicine. Indeed, this developmental aspect is one of its strongest points. Another strength is the emotional vulnerability you show, your willingness to be present with your patients. The last paragraph about not folding is powerful and I hope will inspire readers to embrace a role that cures sometimes, but comforts always.

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR II:** This is an extremely well-written essay that uses the metaphor of the card game Casino to illustrate how the narrator's understanding of the limits of medicine evolved over the course of three significant losses in his professional and personal life. He has reduced the essay from about 1470 words to 1264, and made other changes to improve the manuscript. I'm suggesting small additional cuts of about 30 words, but the essay is really tight. The author rejected two editorial suggestions to further reduce the word count, but I feel he makes good arguments for retaining his original writing in these cases. I recommend publication.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II:** Thank you for these revisions, which have addressed my concern about the nurse's portrayal and shortened the manuscript by about 200 words. I accept your point about "saving the parents' lives" - the implication is clear, and hopefully readers will understand metaphoric use of this phrase. I also recognize the value of the epilogue, and agree that it contributes a sense of completion to the story.

I've suggested a few very small further edits, particularly focused on Nicole's story, which I think could be pulled just a bit tighter.

**You are a compelling, lyrical writer. The metaphor of winnable and unwinnable hands is beautifully developed throughout the essay; and your insights about the limitations of medicine are both moving and profound. Thank you for a superb piece of writing.**

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR III: The author accepted one recommended change and rejected another. However, I believe he thought carefully about the issue, and the suggested revision was fairly minor. This is a strong essay that uses the metaphor of a card game the author played with his grandmother to come to terms with the limitations of medical practice. I recommend accept.**

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR III: Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of editorial recommendations. This is a strong essay that uses a powerful metaphor to come to terms with the limitations of medicine. It is very well-written with a cohesive structure. It will make a valuable contribution to the journal.**