

FM REVIEW 2016 38

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: This is an interesting essay that uses the author's grandmother's deafness to illustrate aspects of the deaf person's experience that are particularly important for a family physician to keep in mind. The essay also contains a "reveal" toward the end that the author, herself a family physician, is experiencing hearing loss. Two of the three reviewers liked the piece quite a lot, as did I (the third reviewer did not seem to appreciate the exigencies of a narrative essay, and was quite negative about the writing style, which I actually don't think is terrible). In particular, both reviewers emphasized the importance of the author showing more of her own vulnerability, a recommendation with which I strongly agree. I recommend the author be given the opportunity to rework the essay in a way that addresses reviewer concerns and brings her situation into greater emotional prominence.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: This is an interesting and insightful essay that uses your grandmother's deafness to illustrate aspects of the deaf person's experience that are particularly important for a family physician to keep in mind. The essay also contains a "reveal" toward the end that you too are experiencing hearing loss. We like both the topic of the essay and the way you have approached it, but would like to highlight several issues to be addressed.

Most importantly, I concur with reviewers 1 and 3 who request a little more openness and personal disclosure on your part about what it is like, as a practicing family physician, to be dealing with hearing loss. In part, this essay is about your grandmother; but importantly, it is also about you, and owning this will make the essay more intimate and meaningful to readers. This is not just tips for dealing with a patient who is deaf; but also what it is like to BE deaf or hard of hearing as well as about how a physician faces disability and life challenge. Along these lines, we hope you can show something of the emotional toll loss of hearing took on your grandmother, as well as the kind of doubts or fears it raised in you. To accomplish this, please consider shifting the balance somewhat by reducing the anecdotes about your grandma, and expanding the final paragraph about you.

Beyond this overall refocusing of the essay, please address the following issues:

- 1) The title is rather vague and weak. Please try to come up with a title that incorporates hearing loss as well as grandma.
- 2) I agree with reviewers that it will have more impact to "hold back" your own struggles with hearing loss until the final part of the essay.
- 3) Reviewer 1 makes an excellent point that you have the opportunity to endorse patient-centered communication approaches in ALL clinical interactions, not merely with patients who have hearing loss. Please consider how you can make this point in the context of the "good" doctor.
- 4) I also agree with reviewer 2's recommendation to avoid commentary (paragraphs) and instead tell a story whenever possible.
- 5) In the context of reviewers' desire for more understanding of what you face as a physician who has a hearing impairment, the last sentence seems disappointing. Perhaps if you are willing to say

something about what it is like to struggle with your own human frailty, you can find a concluding sentence which recognizes that, as a physician, you are learning to ask for help as well as to give it.

6) Please look at the extensive and excellent suggestions for minor revisions made by reviewer 1.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: This essay uses the author's grandmother's experience with hearing loss as an entrée into the importance of clear and respectful communication with hard of hearing patients; and into her own experience of a physician with a hearing impairment. The author has incorporated almost all of the excellent edits suggested by reviewer 1. Per reviewer 3, she has also tightened the points she makes in comparing and contrasting the two physicians who cared for her grandma. Two of the 3 reviewers and asst editor felt that the story should "pivot" away from the grandmother's experience and more toward her own. The author has added material that provides more insight into her own experience as requested. Following reviewers' and editor's suggestions, the author's own hearing impairment now is more of a surprise. The title has been revised as well, although could still use some tweaking.

The revised ms itself was still about 250 words over the recommended limit. I've suggested several additional cuts to the author, which I think still retain the essence of the story, but streamline it. I've also suggested a slightly modified title. I recommend that the author make one further effort to polish the manuscript.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: Thank you for paying such careful attention to reviewer comments and revising accordingly. The essay has a much clearer focus. By getting to the doctor-grandmother interactions more quickly, I think the story will continue to engage readers' interest. The self-disclosures you make about your own challenges with hearing loss are both humorous and touching, and I thank you very much for your generosity in sharing them. I think your "presence" in the story in this way makes it harder for readers to objectify the problems patients with hearing loss face.

I've recommended some additional cuts in the attached document, as your revised version still exceeded the journal word limit for this section. I think these cuts not only shorten the essay, but streamline the content while not sacrificing the flow of your narrative. See what you think.

Your new title is a great improvement, thank you. I've made one further slight revision to tighten it further. Again, see what you think.

Finally, there is one sentence in the essay about patient-centeredness and communication skills which I found confusing in the way it was written, although I recognize that you were attempting to respond to reviewer 1's comment about good communication skills being important with both hearing-impaired and non-hearing-impaired patients. Please see the comment and revise.

Thank you for bringing this valuable topic to the attention of our readers.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR III: Per the author's cover note ("FINAL" revision), she seems to feel she has put in enough work on this essay. I agree! The essay now places more emphasis on the hard of hearing physician-narrator than her hard of hearing grandmother. She has made numerous cuts which both

address the excessive word count but more importantly bring the essay into crisp, clear focus. I recommend accepting this educational and self-revealing essay, which gives us a valuable glimpse into the world of persons with hearing loss.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR III: Thank you for your patience with this process. I know our shared goal for this essay is to make it as perfect as possible. And you have done just that! The essay now places more emphasis on the hard of hearing physician-narrator than on her hard of hearing grandmother. You have made numerous cuts which both address the excessive word count but more importantly bring the essay into crisp, clear focus. The last paragraph is quite wonderful. Overall, this is both an education and self-revealing essay, which gives readers an invaluable glimpse into the experience of persons with hearing loss.