

## **FM REVIEW 2017 11 COMMENTS**

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR:** This essay tackles the difficult topic of caring for previously incarcerated individuals - and ups the ante by describing the narrator's professional relationship with a pedophile. Reviewers had almost identical recommendations for greater focus and clarity of the message. Both reviews are excellent and have many detailed suggestions that could significantly benefit the manuscript. I recommend we give the author a chance to write a better focused essay that tells a compelling story.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR:** As reviewer 2 notes, this essay has "all the elements." However, as both reviewers and the assistant editor agree, in its current form it lacks focus and coherence. In a short form such as you have to work with here, it is difficult to convey more than one central message. You need to decide what this story is about. Because the narrative essay section emphasizes the intersection of the patient's story and the narrator's story, I recommend that you focus on how you changed/what you learned as a result of caring for this patient.

**Other recommendations that would benefit the essay include the following:**

- 1) Offering the reader compelling anecdotes or incidents, rather than a simple recital of facts. Writing in the present tense is a good start, as it enhances immediacy, but it would make the narrative more engaging if you could highlight a few encounters that shifted the way you thought about this patient**
- 2) Rewriting the title to suggest what the essay is about**
- 3) Showing more specifically how you came to terms not only with the fact that your patient was a former prisoner, but a pedophile. That reality will trigger strong reactions in many readers, as it did in you, and it would be helpful for you to share, as a mother of small children, how you came to a place of non-judgment for this patient. You mention your babies twice, yet you never show how you shifted your fears or disgust**
- 4) Sharing with the reader the "reasons" for Frankie's behavior, not by way of rationalizing but to help show your own evolution.**

**The reviewers' comments are excellent and, in their detail, should be very helpful in guiding you through a major revision.**

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR:** The essay explores a young physician's reaction to learning her patient has just been discharged from prison for the crime of pedophilia; and the subsequent evolution in attitude she undergoes. The author has done a significant rewrite, and the ms is much improved. There are still a few problems, such as a vague, rather abstract title; and throughout some persistent examples of vague or awkward writing. The main issue, I think, is that the author needs to make clear that while she grows in compassion and understanding for the difficulties facing this patient, this change in perspective in no way condones or excuses his past crime or his current quasi-criminal (not involving pedophilia) actions. Once this is addressed, I think this essay will make an interesting contribution to the journal.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR:** Thank you for this extensive rewrite. The essay now has a clear focus, which is your evolution in terms of attitude and understanding toward your patient. This is a good choice, and provides a strong spine for the essay. There are a few minor issues still to address, as well as one larger concern:

1) The title still seems vague and uninteresting. Please see suggestions to improve. If you do not like these, look for a title that grounds the essay in specific detail, while emphasizing (as it does) your personal growth.

2) Please review the attached ms to rewrite phrases or sentences that read awkwardly or, again, are vague.

3) Your compassion and caring for Frankie come through very clearly in the essay. However, it might strike the reader as though in some sense you are excusing his past criminality or present quasi-criminality due to poor parenting, lack of social support, and a stultifying prison environment that made it impossible for him to develop appropriate social skills and function. I know this is not your intent, but it might be a good idea to clarify that you learned to judge the behavior, not the person; and came to understand that Frankie was woefully unprepared to navigate life, perhaps before he went to prison, and certainly after. There are a couple of places in the attached where such an addition might be inserted.

With these changes, the essay should make an intriguing and thought-provoking addition to the journal.

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR II:** This essay tells an interesting story about a family doc developing a relationship with a patient who was a pedophile. The author has accepted all recommended revisions, including changing the title and smoothing out some awkwardness in the writing. Importantly, she has clarified that although she found empathy and even compassion for this patient, she never excused or rationalized his criminal behavior.

There is one sentence p. 4, lines 33-35 on pdf, that should be modified for grammatical reasons. It currently reads: "He knows he has had a sexual attraction towards children as a young adult..." It should be corrected to read: "He knows he has had a sexual attraction towards children since he was a young adult..."

With this one minor change, I recommend that we accept the essay.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II:** Thank you for making the recommended edits and for changing the title, which I think is more interesting. Thank you also for making clear that while you found empathy and even compassion for this patient, you never excused or rationalized his criminal behavior. This essay raises thoughtful questions about the imperative of every physician to provide care for all patients, even those whom it is easy to condemn or despise. Your honest account of evolving a relationship with Frankie should trigger both reflection and discussion. Thank you for sharing this experience.