

## FM REVIEW 2017 26 COMMENTS

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR:** This submission is written by a 19 yo combined degree medical student who was diagnosed with cancer in his first year of training. He takes the unusual approach of describing himself in the third person as a patient. Only in the last line does he reveal that he himself is the patient he has described. This is a very unexpected twist; unfortunately, both reviewers and I found it somewhat gimmicky. I've given this a lot of thought, because I did appreciate the "surprise" and it is hard to imagine how to effectively rewrite the essay in a more straightforward manner.

Unfortunately, this stylistic choice limited what the author could share about his experience; as a result, the tone of the writing is excessively clinical and detached. Then too, one reviewer thought the voice was represented as that of a physician and thus misled readers.

Because I agree with both reviewers that the essay expresses an important voice (that of an adolescent cancer patient) that is rarely heard from, I would like to give the author a chance to rework the piece using a more conventional narrative approach. I fear it will lose something in cleverness, but perhaps gain something in authenticity. I am also concerned that this recommendation may be asking too much emotionally of the author, and would like your opinion on this point.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR:** Thank you very much for this essay, and for the courage you've shown in writing it. The editorial team is very interested in your work, and reviewers pointed out that your perspective would make an important contribution to existing literature. However, there is concern that the narrative approach you chose (notably, the "surprise" reveal) ends up feeling a little "gimmicky." More importantly, it limits what you can say in your own voice throughout the rest of the essay. As a result, the tone of the essay is excessively clinical and detached (as a doctor writing about a patient). In fact, one reviewer thought it sounded exactly like a doctor writing about a patient, and felt somewhat misled by the unexpected twist in the last line.

Given this feedback, we encourage you to write a more straightforward essay about your experience as a cancer patient. We recognize that this may be emotionally very challenging, so please be guided by your own needs in this situation. However, if you choose to revise, using the first person voice might allow you to share with readers what it is like to be a young man diagnosed with cancer; and how this very difficult experience has changed the way you think about doctors and patients. Such an essay would be extremely powerful and meaningful.