

FM REVIEW 2017 29 COMMENTS

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: This is a well-written essay that recounts the first few days as an attending at a rural Indian Health Service hospital and contrasts it with the first few days of internship. Reviewers felt it has potential, but seems a random recounting of events without sufficient reflection or a unifying theme. I agree. I suggest that we give the author a chance to revise. Interestingly, I believe we published an essay in 2014 by this same author when he was the intern he now looks back on!

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: Thank you for this very well-written submission. A lot is written about the transition from medical school to residency, but much less attention is paid to the transition from resident to attending physician. Reviewers and editors like the general thrust of this essay, but feel it needs more work.

1) The essay lacks an overall unifying theme. In a brief piece such as this, it is usually better to have a single focus that the reader can easily identify. What is your message? What do you want readers to take away? For example, are you contrasting the first week of internship with the first week of attending to tease out both similarities and differences? If so, you do this only inconsistently. Many of your examples do not reference internship at all and you only circle back to the comparison in your concluding paragraph. If this is important, we recommend bringing out the comparison and contrast more clearly throughout the essay.

2) It is also important in a narrative essay to show evidence of deep reflection and personal/professional learning and growth. The examples you give are each intriguing, but you flit from one to the next without much exploration of their meaning or significance for you. It might be better to stick to one narrative, for example the patient with one lung, and try to weave some of your other points into this story. Alternatively, you might retain a wider panoply of stories but provide an introduction and ending that weave their meaning into a thoughtfully considered unified whole. The final paragraph hints at the intense learning curve you've experienced, but this could be developed further. How has this experience changed you, or confirmed your values, or given you new insights?

3) Finally, it is a little disappointing that you do not explore in any way the significant cultural differences you must have encountered, and how these affect your role as an attending. Although you allude to the unique aspects of your practice setting, you give very little indication that this has affected you in any important way. Please consider incorporating this dimension into the essay.

Overall, the essay struck us as a good beginning, but you could go deeper. We hope you are willing to continue to excavate this experience.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR II: This essay explores the transition from resident to attending, with the added twist that the author is doing so on an Apache reservation in Arizona. The original submission was rather disjointed, filled with interesting anecdotes but without a clear focus. Using the excellent feedback of reviewers, this author has now organized the essay around the insight that what he thought he needed to know and what he actually needed to know were two very different things. I

think the essay reads well, and also has retained a fascinating plunge into historical medical records to find out more about the background of a patient.

There are a couple of confusing points which I ask the author to address below. Once these are rewritten, this will make a good addition to the journal in my view.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II: Thank you for this excellent revision. You've done an outstanding job of focusing the issue on a theme that deserves exploring - how the lessons you thought you needed were actually not the most important ones at all. This is a wonderful and humble point that deserves a lot of thought. You are a strong writer and the essay reads exceptionally well.

I still have a few questions which I'd like you to think about:

1) On p. 3, para 5 you have a rather lengthy sentence whose meaning is not completely clear. One idea seems to be that you hoped to find something of your future older self in this stoic and determined senior. The other thought has to do with the striking differences between you and the physicians who came before you. These are both interesting and important points, but please see if you can express them more clearly.

2) I'd also suggest looking at the beginning of the following paragraph p.3, para 6. I know this is by no means your intention, but the opening sentence could be read to suggest that you had mastered the Apache culture by reading a few books. You actually go on to make a better, more accurate point, and one that is a relevant extension of your overall theme - i.e., what you needed to know about the Apache culture was not only what you discovered in your research, although that was valuable, but also the common bonds you shared with this community and with your patients.

If you can clarify these two areas, I think you will have a really insightful essay that will make a fine contribution to the journal.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR III: The author has rewritten a couple of sections in which the meaning was not clear. This is now a well-focused, well-written essay about the transition from residency to attending. I find its overall theme - that the lessons we prepare for are often not the most important; and the lessons we need the most are ones we've already learned - to be very compelling. I don't think there is anything remaining to improve the piece and I recommend publication.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR III: Thank you for continuing to improve this essay. It now reads very well and has strong internal consistency. The revised sentences are clear and straightforward, and advanced your narrative without getting in the way. The topic of transition from residency to attending is a good one, and the approach you've taken is insightful. I find its overall theme - that the lessons we prepare for are often not the most important; and the lessons we need the most are ones we've already learned - to be very compelling.

I hope that as you continue to immerse yourself in reservation culture, you might consider a future essay that deals with the challenges and opportunities you discover practicing medicine in this setting.

Thank you for considering Family Medicine as an outlet for your reflections.