

## FM REVIEW 2017 16 COMMENTS

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR:** Overall, I thought this was an important paper. As the author observes, physicians treating family members - and themselves - is a fairly common phenomenon. Although this practice does not usually have such a devastating outcome, the very extremity of this case catches attention and I think would provoke much thought. I find the author incredibly brave to have written it (interestingly, I recently rejected a paper about a physician caring for his mother, which was not as well-written or insightful).

My main critique is that the author could soften the "medical" tone he adopts in describing his mother's treatment; reduce (and perhaps eliminate the references) the discussion of treating family; and painful as it would be say more about what he has concluded from this terrible experience. I would like to see more reflection on how difficult it is to resist the demands of a parent (you must be my doctor); as well as what he might have done differently; and how he is trying to come to terms with his guilt and even forgive himself.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR:** Thank you for having the courage to write this truly devastating essay. It was both painful and illuminating to read. It is an incredibly moving document of a practice that happens all too often in medicine, although usually not with such heartbreaking consequences.

In terms of making this an even more effective essay, I would recommend the following:

1) Try to maintain a conversational tone throughout. When you discuss your "treatment plan" for your mom, you sound more like a doctor than a son. Similarly, when you discuss physicians' treatment of self and family (the referenced paragraph) you revert to journal mode, which is rather jarring. I'd recommend eliminating the footnotes. You can still make similar points, but try to do so from a more personal perspective: "I knew that (or I only discovered later that) The AMA Code of Ethics offers guidelines on this issue;" "I remember Osler's words..."

I hesitate to make the next suggestion, because I can't imagine how painful this whole subject must be for you, but I think it would improve the essay if you could say just a few words about how hard it is as an adult child to resist a parent's pleas ("you must be my doctor"); and to share your own conclusions about the ethical dilemma treatment of family poses. If you could go back in time, would you make different choices? Finally, can you provide any guidance or insight for physicians whose treatment of family members has led to bad outcomes? How are you coping? Is there a possibility of self-forgiveness?

Again, I do not mean to presume on your grief, but I think that showing a little more of your own struggle will be of immeasurable value to others.

Again, I do not mean to presume on your grief, but I know anything along these lines that you could offer would be of immense value to others.