

## FM REVIEW 2017 35 COMMENTS

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR:** This poem describes a young patient with probably Type 2 diabetes (20 years ago I would have guessed Type 1) who struggles with "addiction" to the junk foods that have contributed to his disease. The reviews show the difficulties of interpreting subjective writing: One reviewer understood the poem quickly and liked it a lot; the other reviewer found it puzzling, confusing, and difficult to interpret. This is because the poem is using the term "drug addict" in a non-standard sense (which in my opinion makes us think); and describes addiction itself in a way that we do not expect. Overall, I like the poem. I find the topic very suitable for a family medicine audience; and I appreciate the way that it shakes up our thinking. However, the author is not always clear in his writing whether the metformin or the junk food is the needed "fix." I suggest the author attempt a revision that will bring his core message more clearly into focus.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR:** Thank you for this submission. We were intrigued by the way you inverted the concept of "drug addict" in this poem. The reviews show the difficulties of interpreting subjective writing: One reviewer understood the poem quickly and liked it a lot; the other reviewer found it puzzling, confusing, and difficult to interpret. I think this is because the poem is using the term "drug addict" in a non-standard sense (which in my opinion makes us think); and describes addiction itself in a way that we do not expect. Overall, this approach to the problem of diabetes in a young population is novel and interesting. The topic is very relevant for a family medicine audience who struggle daily with childhood obesity and its complications; and I appreciate the way that the poem shakes up our thinking.

That being said, we are recommending that you revise the poem to help the reader grasp your message more clearly.

1) The main problem for both reviewer 1 and myself, is that the metaphor is a bit muddled at times. In my read, the addiction is to the junk food; thus the "fix" is more junk food. The metformin is comparable to methadone. Particularly in stanza 3, the source of the "high" is confusing. Please look at this again, and make sure the metaphor carries through consistently throughout the poem.

2) It might help if you could indicate that the young person portrayed has Type 2 diabetes (not Type 1 - if this is indeed the case). This clarification might make the portrayal more relatable for our readership.

3) It is a bit confusing when you change voice from third to first person. Perhaps you can italicize the last three lines in stanza 3 to indicate the shift in speaker.

4) Punctuation is usually not necessary in a poem, and often distracts from its flow. Please consider whether there is a purpose beyond the grammatical for the punctuation you've included.

5) Please consult the attached edits for suggested minor word changes.

Thank you for being willing to work further on this piece to bring out its core message a bit more effectively.

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR II:** The author has put in a lot of effort on this revision. He has made clear when the narrator is speaking, and when the patient described is speaking. He has cleaned up confusion about what the poem is about by clarifying the metaphor of drug addiction. He has addressed problems of punctuation and capitalization.

There are still some awkward phrasings and word choices. I've attached some editing suggestions for the author's consideration.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II:** Thank you for this revised version of your poem. It is now clear when the narrator is speaking, and when the patient described is speaking. You've also cleaned up confusion about what the poem is about by clarifying the metaphor of drug addiction. You've also addressed problems of punctuation and capitalization.

We are now at the level of wordsmithing. As you'll see from the attached, a few words or phrases struck me as somewhat precious, and I've suggested using more ordinary phrasing.

The first stanza is tight, and reads very well.

The image of the second stanza (tears dripping onto pills) did not quite come across as written. Think about revising. I LOVED the phrase "shame-stained." Fabulous.

Stanza 3 works well, but I found the concluding long line to be distracting. Consider a line break somewhere in here.

In the fourth stanza, I liked the abrupt listing of the junk foods. I realize I'm reversing myself, but I found it clumsy to read "type II diabetes" in a poem. Once you mention medformin, glucose, and high sugar junk foods, I think our journal readers will understand this man's diagnosis.

Along these lines, I don't think you need to add "capital C" because "coke" in this context would not make sense, whereas "Coke" fits in perfectly with the list of high sugar substances. On the other hand, you might want to capitalize Cheez because you are referring to a particular product, not cheese in general.

This last stanza is very long. I thought you could break it up by making the final two lines a couplet. Also, this long line seems awkward, so I've divided it in two. See what you think.

Thank you for continuing to work on this piece. Its cleverness conceals a serious message that all family doctors need to keep in mind.

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR III:** In an effort to move things through the system more expeditiously, I'm recommending acceptance. However, I do have two small recommendations that perhaps can be addressed in copy-editing.

1) Line 33 - the word "pills" grates with its recent use in line 22 (with the revisions, line 33 follows directly after line 22). I'd encourage the author to consider substituting "tablets" in line 33.

2) Line 48 - the word "hits" sounds clumsy because of its recent use in line 43 (with the revisions, these lines are only one line apart). I'd encourage the author to consider substituting "moves into," "enters" or some other synonym in line 48.

In all other respects, the poem is much tighter, leaner, and sparer. I think it is an interesting twist on addiction, and will make an intriguing contribution to the journal.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR III:** This is really a strong revision! The poem is much sparer, tighter, leaner. I like its succinctness - it has been stripped of all extraneous observations and details. I like what you did with the three line stanzas, and the concluding stanza works very well in terms of showing not telling. The image of the Cheez-stained fingers as the last lingering one is great. At the core of this poem has always been a fascinating twist on what we think of as addiction, and I think it will cause our readers to pause and reflect on the struggles their patients have not with drugs, but with food.

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These are only stylistic issues, and making further changes are at your discretion. Either way, this has become a really fine poem.