

## FM REVIEW 2018 7 COMMENTS

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR:** This is a well-written essay by a medical student that is an exemplar of the "show, don't tell" school of writing. It tells a vivid story of a student interviewing - and struggling with - two suicidal adolescent psych patients. The title "Countertransference" hints to the observant reader the extent to which the stressed out, overwhelmed medical student identifies with them. In general, I really like the essay, but I agree with reviewer 1 that there is insufficient foundation for the final unexpected twist of the author experiencing her own suicidal ideation, or at least fanaticizing about how freeing suicide might be. It is dramatically effective, but not completely believable or understandable. I'm requesting that the author find a way to provide a subtle indication of her own burn-out and despair (the clues are there, but the final images seem disproportionate to the scattered references to frustration and emotional distance) earlier in the essay, without too obviously broadcasting her state of mind. If she can figure out a way to do this, I'd love to see this essay in the journal.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR:** Thank you for this very well-written essay. It is an exemplar of the "show, don't tell" school of writing and in general is quite effective in conveying a lot of sub-text simply by describing what happened. You tell a vivid story of a medical student interviewing - and struggling with - two suicidal adolescent psych patients. The title "Countertransference" hints to the observant reader the extent to which the stressed out, overwhelmed student identifies with them.

Overall, your Spartan literary aesthetic works well, but I agree with reviewer 1 that there is insufficient foundation for the final unexpected twist of the student experiencing her own suicidal ideation, or at least fanaticizing about how freeing suicide might be. It is dramatically effective, but not completely believable or understandable. Please find a way to provide a subtle indication of the narrator's own burn-out and despair earlier in the essay (the clues are there, but the final images of "fire and twisted metal" seem disproportionate to previous scattered references to frustration and emotional distance), without too obviously broadcasting her state of mind. Otherwise, the essay provides compelling insights into the inner experience of medical students wrestling with how to balance the science and art of medicine.

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR II:** This is a powerful, raw essay about the stresses and uncertainties of a medical student caring for two suicidal adolescents and an unempathic attending who seems clueless about the student's anxieties. Reviewers and I had only minor edits, the main concern being to lay a little clearer groundwork to justify the brief but jolting contemplation of suicide the medical student indulges in at the end of the essay. The author has done a superb job of providing subtle hints throughout the text that show her struggles and self-doubt. Overall the essay is an affecting statement that will remind our readers of just how challenging the clinical years of training can be.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II:** Thank you for these minor edits, which nevertheless strengthen the essay. You've done an excellent job of laying groundwork throughout the essay that justifies the final contemplation of self-harm as a way of escaping the stresses and pressures of clinical training. Your essay is a powerful, at times amusing, and always moving window into the struggles and self-doubt

that can plague any student, as well as a spot-on portrayal of an unempathic attending clueless about the student's anxieties.

Thank you for sharing your superb writing with us and please always remember that no one in medicine should carry the burdens of this profession alone. We all experience doubts and even at times despair. We all need to have the courage to reach out to others for support and encouragement.