

FM REVIEW 2018 12 COMMENTS

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: This is an exceptionally well-written essay that tells an emotionally engaging story about a patient who wants her diagnosis of depression/anxiety removed from her chart so that she can go out and buy a gun.

I liked the essay (which is in its first revision), especially the way in which the author's original arrogance was tempered in this version. The theme of the red and blue divide and how it affects clinical medicine is interesting and timely. I also liked the way the theme of "fear" was interwoven throughout the essay.

I do have a couple of issues to raise:

1) What are the ethics of simply "deleting" a diagnosis based on patient request? I think the author should comment on this - his own fear of his patient's wrath led him to an unethical act (in my opinion).

2) If the patient was not miraculously "cured" and in fact was still anxious and depressed, how did the author feel about her desire to obtain weaponry? Did this cause him any concern? I think this also should be addressed.

3) Narrative essays should not be opinion essays, and in a couple of places this submission slips into editorializing. These are noted below as well as suggestions for change.

Overall, I'd like to see this essay published in our journal. It highlights that medicine is not separate from the differences that threaten our country. The ending of the piece is discouraging, but honest and authentic. That's where we are often as not these days, but this thoughtful essay at least suggests we need to find a better way.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR:

This is an exceptionally well-written essay that tells an emotionally engaging story about a patient who wants her diagnosis of depression/anxiety removed from her chart so that she can go out and buy a gun.

I especially liked the way in which your original judgment was tempered and qualified in this version. The theme of the red and blue divide and how it affects clinical medicine is interesting and timely. I also liked the way the theme of "fear" was interwoven throughout the essay.

I do have a few issues to raise:

1) What are the ethics of simply "deleting" a diagnosis based on patient request? I think you should comment on this choice, especially since it seemed driven by your own fear of your patient's wrath.

2) If the patient was not miraculously "cured" and in fact was still anxious and depressed, how did you feel about her desire to obtain weaponry? Did this cause you any concern? I think this issue also should be addressed.

3) Narrative essays should not be opinion pieces, and in a couple of places this submission slips into editorializing. Specifically, p. 4, lines 31-47 and p. 5, lines 17-36 would be more appropriate in an opinion essay. I think this problem can be easily remedied by personalizing the language, sticking with your own experience, rather than generalizing to society as a whole, or physicians in general: "In the years since residency, what I've learned from my patients is how fear has transformed our society..."; "In my experience, politics can interfere..."

The ending of your piece is discouraging, but honest and authentic. That's where we are often as not these days, but your thoughtful essay at least suggests we need to find a better way.