

FM REVIEW 2018 4 COMMENTS

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: This is an interesting essay about a young attending and his resident "storm" team during Hurricane Florence. Although one might expect it to focus on the care of patients during this storm, instead it focuses on a small act of kindness the team performed for the children of employees who remained in daycare while their parents kept the hospital running. This choice of emphasis I think ultimately works, but needs to be presented with a little more awareness and intentionality. The other point that needs to be brought into greater prominence is the reactions and learning of the residents, who except for jokes about the food, disappear into a generic "they/we." Finally, the essay becomes kind of abstract and platitudinous in the concluding paragraphs and these could be strengthened by attending more to how this event affected both the narrator-physician and his residents.

Reviewers also liked the essay, but also felt it could be improved by tighter writing and more attention to lessons learned.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: This is a timely and touching essay about the importance of a simple act of kindness in the sort of emergent conditions we are likely to see much more of. We like the essay. It is well-written and tells a story of caring that is relevant to all family physicians.

However, in our view, there are a few overall conceptual issues that need to be addressed before we can consider it further.

1) It is a little surprising that you say nothing about kindness/compassion toward your patients. In the end, the uniqueness of the essay's focus (on the daycare kids housed in the hospital while their parents worked to keep it going) is what makes it so interesting. But you need some sort of framing of this issue: "The team and I expected to focus our attentions on our patients, who were understandably fearful and confused, and we did. [Give a couple of sentence details]. Unexpectedly, however, it was a small, peripheral act that taught us the most about what it means to be a family doctor."

2) The second issue may be evident in the language I've chosen above. You say at the start that you want to ensure the wellbeing of your residents, and give the anecdote about the shared meals and the indecipherable food. That's cute, but that seems to be the last of the residents. How were they affected by the hurricane? By the distribution of stickers to the scare children? Help us see that the welfare of the residents, as well as their understanding of what it means to be a doctor, emerged from this apparently insignificant act.

A few more minor points. 1) The ending sentences are not as muscular as they might be, I think perhaps because they are kind of abstract generalizations. If you ground this final paragraph in what you and your residents learned about doctoring it will be more compelling.

2) In general, you are a good writer. However, you tend to rely on a structural formulation that introduces the sentence or clause with "as" which can become distracting after a while. Please consider other ways of phrasing the lines in question. You don't have to replace every "as," but just find a few ways of altering this habit.

3) The central story of the essay, the kids and the stickers, is a wonderful one. However, it could be shortened to give it greater power.

Please look at reviewer comments and be sure in making your revisions to keep your essay within the 1000 word limit.

Thank you for sharing an affecting experience and the lesson about kindness and compassion it conveyed.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR 2:



The author has made many recommended deletions, consolidated some paragraphs, and overall tightened his essay. The result is a stronger essay about being a "storm team" during a hurricane and the lessons learned for residents and attending alike from a simple act of human kindness. I recommend publication.

Note to Sam: There is a "to" missing on p. 3, line 46 of the pdf :-)

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR 2: Thank you for your acknowledgment of the efforts of reviewers and editorial team to improve an already touching story. We appreciate the feedback! Thank you also for the changes you've made, including several recommended deletions, consolidation of certain paragraphs, and overall tightening of the language. (Most of have a few writing tics, you will probably be hyper-aware of "as" for quite a while :-). Thank you for cleaning these up). The last paragraph in particular ties the whole essay together.

The overall result is a stronger essay about the lessons learned for residents and attending alike from a simple act of human kindness during a frightening hurricane. Thank you for the extra work you invested in this piece.