

## FM REVIEW 2018 27 COMMENTS

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR:** This is a very well-written essay eulogizing the author's father-in-law, a (family?) physician in the old style, always available to his patients, intimately engaged with their stories and lives. The author, himself a family doc, focuses on what he learned about the rewards of the patient-doctor relationship and the importance of understanding and honoring end of life wishes.

The essay has potential, as the two reviewers both agree, but I agree with reviewer 2 that it needs significant revision. One of the oddest things is that the essay opens (to good dramatic effect) with an account of the father-in-law's suicide attempt; but then it is never referenced further in the essay. Especially since the author claims to have learned so much about respecting patients' EoL wishes, it seems strange that he does not attempt to process his own reaction to this act borne of great suffering and desperation. Along these same lines, it is not at all clear exactly what the author has learned about honoring patients' desires regarding death and dying.

As it stands, the essay is too much of a eulogy, and not enough of a reflection that others can learn from. However, I do think it can be reworked to make a relevant and meaningful contribution to the journal.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR:** Thank you for sharing this moving eulogy of your father-in-law, Giacinto. He was obviously a wonderful and dedicated physician, beloved by many, and a great inspiration to you personally. You write well and eloquently and really bring your father-in-law to life in this essay.

Unfortunately, for your essay to be pertinent to the journal, it should not be a eulogy so much as a reflection on what you learned from this remarkable man and doctor. You do address the lessons you extracted from him as a role model in two ways: 1) the importance of the doctor-patient relationship and truly knowing and empathizing with your patients' stories 2) the importance of respecting patients' EoL wishes. Regarding the first point, the essay does a good job of showing the reader how you now try to make more room in your practice for acknowledging narrative and relationship - this is excellent.

However, regarding the latter point about EoL, the essay is a bit muddled. I think this is in part because you do not engage clearly with Giacinto's suicide attempt. You describe it clearly and empathically. But, very oddly, it is never referred to again, even as you claim that he taught you a great deal about patients' wishes as they approach death. How did his suicide attempt affect you? What did you learn from it? How did it affect your care of him? What have you taken away from this experience that you can apply to other patients at end of life? I think if you can more authentically tackle this very difficult issue, the essay will be both stronger and clearer.

We hope you will be willing to revise your work. If you choose to do so, please take into consideration reviewers' comments as well as my suggestions (above and in the attached ms).

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR II:** This moving and well-crafted essay describes the suicide attempt of the author's terminally-ill physician father-in-law, as well as the aftermath and lessons learned. The main

concern was that it read too much like a eulogy and too little like an essay that could be of interest to our general readership. In particular, the essay did not deal clearly with the main event - the suicide attempt - and how it affected the physician-narrator. That and other more minor issues have now been very well addressed. I recommend accepting this essay for publication.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II:** Thank you for this excellent revision, which is more transparent about your own initial views regarding suicide and how they evolved as a result of your father-in-law's action. Thank you also for removing a few extraneous details that distracted more than added. As noted earlier, you are a strong writer and succeed in bringing your Giacinto to life through your well-crafted language, as well as showing how much he taught you even in his final days. Thank you for this powerful essay.