

FM REVIEW 2019 23 COMMENTS

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: This essay tells the story of a female veteran and her journey toward healing. It concludes with a plea for physicians to pay greater attention to the needs and concerns of women in the military and after discharge. The problem for me is that, as written, the essay focuses solely on the patient's story. There is no sense of the patient's relationship with the physician, or how her doctor might have been affected by knowing this patient. We do not see what, if anything, the author learned, or how their clinical practice or teaching might have been impacted. There is an absence of any reflection. Further, it concludes with an injunction to other physicians to do a better job of recognizing the needs of this population. This is a classic example of the author offering an opinion. Unfortunately, I do not see any way the existing manuscript can be rewritten sufficiently to make it a good fit for the narrative essay section. If the author wished to rework it completely and resubmit as a new essay, this could be a viable option.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: Thank you for bringing to our attention the mental health needs of female veterans and women serving in the military. This is an important topic and deserves to be addressed. You tell an uplifting story of a female veteran and her journey toward healing. It concludes with a plea for physicians to pay greater attention to the health needs of women in the military and after discharge.

Unfortunately, as written, the essay is not a good fit for this section of the journal. The problem is that it focuses solely on the patient's story. With the exception of one tantalizing reference, "The five years that followed...were some of the most enriching for both of us," there is no sense of the patient's relationship with the physician, or how the doctor might have been affected by knowing this patient. We do not see what, if anything, the author learned from this patient. What precisely was so enriching? In the narrative essay section, we are looking for reflective essays that show how doctors and patients affect and learn from each other. We expect that submissions will tell these kinds of personal stories in a way that shows evidence of thoughtful contemplation and insight.

Further, as a matter of policy, the journal does not publish opinions, no matter how much we might agree with them. The concluding paragraph of your essay, a call to your fellow physicians to do a better job of recognizing the needs of this population, is really offering your opinion about how to remedy a problem. Narrative essays must stick to the particular story being told and allow readers to draw their own conclusions.

If you wished to rework the piece taking into consideration these concerns and resubmit as a new essay, this is certainly an option. We value the issues you are raising but would need to see them presented in a form that reflects on what you, as a physician, learned from this patient and how, knowing her, changed your clinical practice or other aspects of your life.