

## FM REVIEW 2019 4 COMMENTS

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR:** This is a well-crafted and moving essay about the first time a medical student truly apprehends the reality of illness, the implications of getting a serious, life-threatening diagnosis "right." It is an involving story that carries the reader along to its touching conclusion.

I agree with Reviewer 2, however, that the author needs to think through the concept of a security blanket more carefully. The author argues that he no longer needs a "blanket of reassurance" and that his task is to give that blanket to the patient. I think the reality is more complicated. Without doubt, the patient needs reassurance. However, the author is still a learner, and needs support and reassurance as well. Reviewer 2 suggests the metaphor of "sharing" the blanket and I think this has potential. The essay would be stronger if the author could capture this nuance.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR:** You have written a well-crafted and moving essay about the first time a medical student truly apprehends the reality of illness, the implications of getting a serious, life-threatening diagnosis "right." It is an involving story that carries the reader along to its touching conclusion.

I agree with Reviewer 2, however, that you need to think through the concept of a security blanket a bit more deeply. You say you no longer need a "blanket of reassurance" and that your task as a medical student is to give that blanket to the patient. I think the reality is more complicated than that. Without doubt, the patient needs reassurance. However, you are still a learner, and there is no shame in acknowledging that you too need support and reassurance as well. The essay would be stronger if you could capture this nuance. Reviewer 2 offers the idea of "sharing" the blanket, rather than giving it away. This seems to have potential for capturing the subtleties of the relationship between student and patient. Please think further about this issue, and see if you can modify the essay accordingly.

The attached copy includes some recommended stylistic minor revisions. Reviewer 1 suggested these small revisions as well:

page 2, line 27...probably should have the word "with" before both

Page 3 Line 18.... comma needed after help and before drowning. Also needs semicolon after stuffy

Page 3 sentence on lines 24-26 is cumbersome and might be easier broken up. Also, line 41 sentence could be rearranged to be clearer. "After I took a brief moment to reassure the patient that we would do everything for him that we could, I slowly trudged out of the room to find my attending.

**Comments to Editor II:** This is a lovely essay by a medical student who apprehends the impact of disease on a patient as he listens to his lungs through the stethoscope. I'd requested only minor word changes, with the one exception of rewriting the concluding paragraph to incorporate a reviewer's excellent suggestion of "sharing" the "blanket of reassurance." The author has complied, but the writing is a little rough. I'm hoping that the minor revision suggested below can be handled in copy-editing:

Sam, I recommend that the final two sentences read as follows: "While the security blanket may not help me identify lung sounds on auscultation, it does encourage me to give support and reassurance to my patients as they face adversity. Perhaps I am not the only person in the room that needs a security blanket, and it is my job as an evolving medical student to share that blanket of reassurance with my patient in times of need."

Comments to Author II: Thank you for your minor revisions, which nevertheless polished an already excellent essay. Thank you also for embracing the idea of "sharing the blanket," such a lovely concept that fits your overall theme so well. The concluding paragraph captures this image well. However, the writing is a little rough, and I would suggest modifying as follows:

"While the security blanket may not help me identify lung sounds on auscultation, it does encourage me to give support and reassurance to my patients as they face adversity. Perhaps I am not the only person in the room that needs a security blanket, and it is my job as an evolving medical student to share that blanket of reassurance with my patient in times of need."

First, changing "the patient" to "my patient(s)" creates a sense of commitment and ownership that suits the overall tone of the essay. Secondly, using the plural of "patient" makes your subject consistent with the pronoun "they." Finally, and most importantly, I don't think you need to "take off" the blanket in order to share it. You and your patient can both huddle under it!