

FM REVIEW 2019 13 COMMENTS

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: This is a well-told tale about the importance of having a family doctor. It all works quite well as a narrative essay with the exception of the final paragraph. Here in my view the essay veers too much into policy observations and recommendations and not enough into story-telling. Also, the conclusion lacks any kind of introspection, reflection, or personal insight, which are the hallmarks of a narrative essay. It is fine that the author describes both the patient story and the "parallel universe" in which she hears constant queries about the value of family medicine and the imminent takeover of the physician's role by algorithms and AI. I also like the way she brings the patient's family back in to the essay. My only recommendation is that she rework the final paragraph to reflect more on what she learned from her relationship with this patient about the necessity of retaining and elevating the role of primary care physicians in patient care. This would also give her the opportunity to share a little more about how she was affected by the confluence of caring for this patient while attending conferences that questioned her value; and perhaps how these two worlds colliding recommitted her to the practice of her specialty.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: This is a well-told tale about the importance of having a family doctor. It all works quite well as a narrative essay with the exception of the final paragraph. Here in my view the essay veers too much into policy observations and recommendations and abandons the story-telling mode that makes it such a good narrative essay up to this point. The narrative essay is intended to tell a story, not hold forth on healthcare policy. I like the way the essay describes both your interactions with the patient and the "parallel universe" of professional conferences where you hear constant challenges of the value of family medicine and the imminent takeover of the physician's role by algorithms and AI. I also like the way you bring the patient's family back in to the essay.

My only recommendation is that you rework the final paragraph to reflect more on what you learned from your relationship with this patient about the necessity of retaining and elevating the role of primary care physicians in patient care. This would also give you an opportunity to show a little more of yourself - how did this confluence of your patient's care and these conferences affect you? Did these two worlds colliding perhaps recommit you to advocating for family docs? Addressing these questions keeps the essay as YOUR story, while enabling you to share larger thoughts about the future of family medicine.

Finally, I would recommend a title change. The current title is very academic and does not really reflect the story at the heart of your essay. Consider something shorter and more gripping: **Do We Still Need Family Doctors?**

COMMENTS TO EDITOR II: I continue to like this essay, but I don't feel the author has done a very good job of making it more narrative. It reads well up until the final two paragraphs. The second paragraph from the end cites a lot of research to make the author's points, which I see as right on the edge of relevance to a narrative essay. At a minimum, I'd suggest deleting the line about quadruple aims. I do like the way it brings Solomon and his family back into the picture.

The concluding paragraph unfortunately, despite the rewrite, essentially expresses an opinion: We should not be talking about whether robots should replace family docs, but about payment systems that fairly compensate skilled physicians for all the work they do. Agree, of course! But this is not narrative. The two themes somehow need to be brought together in this final paragraph, something along the lines of "I think of Solomon and his family often, how we began our relationship and how it ended. When I remember how I was able to assist them in honoring his final wishes, my pride in being a family doctor is renewed. I will continue to care for patients like Solomon, and I will continue to go to national meetings about the future of medicine. In honor of Solomon's memory, and in honor of all patients served well by their family physicians, I will continue to work to shift the conversation so that we will talk less about robot avatars and more about fair reimbursement practices; less about whether family medicine should cease to exist and more about how to embrace and strengthen a specialty that faithfully serves so many so well." Something along these lines.

Finally, I still feel the title is not very narrative. It is the title of an opinion piece. From the author's own response, it seems pretty clear to me she is intending to write a narrative essay that makes policy points. I think that jumbles the intent of the narrative essays.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II: This is a very well-written essay that is particularly innovative in the way it contrasts on the ground clinical practice caring for patients with the discourse at national meetings about the future of family medicine. However, I am still bothered by the way the concluding two paragraphs jumble narrative and policy points.

The second paragraph from the end cites a lot of research to make the author's points, which I see as right on the edge of relevance to a narrative essay. At a minimum, I'd suggest deleting the line about quadruple aims. I do like the way it brings Solomon and his family back into the picture.

The concluding paragraph in my read essentially expresses an opinion: We should not be talking about whether robots should replace family docs, but about payment systems that fairly compensate skilled physicians for all the work they do. Agree, of course! But this is not narrative. The two themes you've identified - Solomon's care and the discussions at national conferences regarding the future of family medicine - somehow need to be brought together in this final paragraph, something along the lines of "I think of Solomon and his family often, how we began our relationship and how it ended. When I remember how I was able to assist them in honoring his final wishes, my pride in being a family doctor is renewed. I will continue to care for patients like Solomon, and I will continue to go to national meetings about the future of medicine. In honor of Solomon's memory, and in honor of all patients served well by their family physicians, I will continue to work to shift the conversation so that we will talk less about robot avatars and more about fair reimbursement practices; less about whether family medicine should cease to exist and more about how to embrace and strengthen a specialty that faithfully serves so many so well." This is a little clumsy, but something along these lines.

Finally, I still feel the title is not very narrative. It is the title of an opinion piece. Please consider working, maybe along the lines of "What Solomon's Story Taught Me About the Future of Family Medicine."