

FSH DECISION LETTER 2017 4

This 55 word story describes a dramatic moment in which the physician temporarily becomes the patient's heart when the by-pass machine fails. The sense of having the patient's life in one's hands is a powerful one that all physicians will recognize. The story is a good one, and we believe with some revision it will make a valuable contribution to this journal.

The main shortcoming of the story, as described by reviewers, is that it itself is too "mechanical." By simply describing what happened, not enough of the emotion of the experience is conveyed. As currently written, there is too much literal description, insufficient image and metaphor. Without "telling," show us something of how this incredible moment affected you, what did it mean to you?

Personally, I did not have as much of a problem with the repetition of "turn" as did reviewer 3. What I wanted to know is as you turned, what were you thinking? What were you feeling? How did you yourself "turn" as you performed this lifesaving task?

The two strongest lines in my opinion are "For now I am a heart" (this works on so many levels, literal, metaphoric, symbolic!); and the concluding line ("This heart won't last for long" – again the ambiguity of whose heart is referred to, and in what sense the word is used, are very effective). Weaker lines are "each turn a pulse of blood/Pull blue blood out/and push red in." These say nothing beyond their actual meaning. We know this already. Help us see something we don't know.

DECISION LETTER II

I am pleased to inform you that your work has now been accepted for publication in Families, Systems, and Health. The revisions made in response to reviewer recommendations are creative, interesting, and aesthetically pleasing while also intimating more of the emotion that reviewers sought, especially in the newly added third stanza. The contrast between the primitive mechanism of Archimedes screw and a bubbling spring (a lovely metaphor for a vibrant heart) also creates a vivid image. The ambiguity of the last line ties in all the various elements of the poem – does "it" refer to the patient's heart, the physician as a temporary artificial heart, the failure of the real heart. Who knows how this story will end? This piece uses the 55 word format in an effective and revealing way to capture a moment when a physician must literally step in to try to save a patient's life.