

FSH COMMENTS 2017 5

This poem sparked deep engagement from reviewers, always a positive sign. All felt it was a moving portrait of a patient; and, as you will see, the poem triggered deep reflections in them about larger issues in the patient-doctor relationship. With some minor revision, this poem will make a valuable contribution to the journal.

Major recommendations: There was a sense from all 3 reviewers and the associate editor that the poem would benefit from showing a little more of the narrator who learned so much “about love and loss” from this patient. Showing us the patient is important, but helping us grasp what he gave the narrator may be equally important. Yet we see very little of this. What was the connection that emerged between patient and doctor?

There was some ambivalence among reviewers about the ambivalence of the last line. Reviewers 1 and 2 suggest alternatives, and Reviewer 3 is unclear about the message you are trying to convey. Personally, I like that this line is open to all sorts of interpretations. However, connecting this ambivalence to the relative absence of the narrator up to this point, the introduction of the “I” is a bit jarring. It might help if, as per above, you could enable the reader to see not only the patient, but also his doctor. You might also be able to show what these lines mean to the narrator.

Minor recommendations: Reviewer 1 likes the style of capitalizing first word of each line. By contrast, I’d actually encourage you to consider using the same line breaks, but follow sentence capitalization. This is just a possibility for your consideration, not a requirement.

“Sighing inside” does not have a clear referent— is the narrator sighing inside? Is the song sighing inside the narrator? maybe it could be rephrased “the words from his favorite song (rather than band?) murmur inside me, like a sigh.” Also please see reviewer 1’s comments about word choice here, regarding the mood you are trying to create. Are “murmur” and “sighing” the words you want?

Reviewer 2 makes the valuable observation that the song lyrics may apply not only to the patient but to the physician. I disagree that the reviewer’s criticism that the lyrics are too well known (I’d never heard them), but it might be worthwhile to consider linking them not only to the patient but the doctor (reviewer 1 tries something similar through her suggestion of a last line).

Reviewer 2 also makes some very specific suggestions in terms of reworking the poem. In general, these efforts in my view seem to rewrite the poem excessively, so while you should peruse them I would not feel obligated to incorporate them, unless you happen to find a turn of phrase you think speaks to the poem you have written. Please do consider whether MaryJane is the best name for the deceased girlfriend (and if it is an intentional choice related to marijuana, maybe this could be acknowledged overtly in the poem). This reviewer has an intriguing suggestion for an alternative last line, i.e., bringing the song forward into the next exam room and therefore extending it to the next patient. Perhaps there is the kernel of a worthwhile direction to consider here.

The stanza starting with “He has loved; he has lost” might use a little tweaking. This line could be read as both too dramatic and too sentimental. Somehow what follows is not as emotionally evocative as it should be.

Overall, this is a strong poem that poignantly grapples with the caring and the limitations of patient care.

DECISION LETTER 2

Thank you very much for submitting your manuscript "Carry On" for consideration for publication in *Families, Systems, and Health*. I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to review the manuscript and am able to make an editorial decision. Overall, this version is a significant improvement over the original. With a few deft additions ("I prepare," "matching his posture," "looking for his gaze," "With a sigh," "Ruining") you have brought the narrator to life. We see how she cares for this patient, how she regrets not being able to do more for him, how she tries hard to connect with him. I feel this really enhances the poem. The last stanza is very affecting in its simplicity, and placing the song lyrics as the conclusion is effective.

Based on this review, I would like to ask you to consider a little more tinkering with the poem before it is accepted for publication. These mostly involve minor word changes, eliminating a few words that seem unnecessary, suggesting substitutions to avoid repetition (learn to, of, and about), and proposing a line break. Then there are those pesky capitalizations. In general, I like your choices, but suggested a different approach in a few places. With a few more tweaks, this poem will truly sparkle!

The use of the 3 line quote, although it is quite moving in the context of the poem, may present a difficulty. I checked with Andrew Ferreira, who back in April wrote me as follows: "I conferred with one of our in house Journal Production Managers regarding your query. A reference will be needed and a note that grants copyright permission for the usage of the three lines." By reference, I think this can just be a footnote citing the song title and artist. However, it looks like copyright release must be obtained; and it is not clear to me whether you as author, or the journal itself, is responsible for obtaining this.

DECISION LETTER 3

I am pleased to inform you that your work has now been accepted for publication in *Families, Systems, and Health*.

It was accepted on %FINAL_EDITOR_DECISION_DATE%. Thank you so much for obtaining the necessary copyright release. Thank you also for the additional minor changes which nevertheless improve the overall flow and impact of the poem. It now beautifully captures the poignancy and persistence of this very touching patient-doctor relationship.