

## FSH DECISION LETTER 2017 7

Based on my review and on reviewer comments I am not able to accept your submission. However, we recognize the situation as an extremely poignant one, and would be willing to reconsider a different version of this submission. Several changes need to be contemplated:

1) As you can see, two reviewers never figured out the context for the poem, and thought it was about a well child visit! The third reviewer also comments on the lack of clarity and coherence. The piece needs to make clearer where and who the actors are, and what has happened. The names, without any reference points, are also distracting (is Billy the boyfriend or another person in the car?). Setting the stage will also help the reader understand that the child is not withholding but likely in shock. If that is accomplished, the child's query about getting a shot becomes incredibly poignant. Otherwise, it remains confusing.

2) The dialogue form is partly effective, because it conveys a structure the medical team tried to impose for wresting order from chaos. But it is so fragmented that it is hard to extract any sense of the emotional impact of what is clearly a horrific event on either the child or the interlocutor. We recognize how difficult it is to work within the constraints of the 55 word format, but please try to establish greater emotional depth for the piece. It needs to be more than she asked, he responded.

3) The last line is not as strong as it could be. It might be read as somewhat patronizing to this child who perhaps has suffered terrible loss and no doubt is in shock.

The strongest lines, in my opinion, are "what's her grown-up name?" showing the vast gulf between the medical professional and the child; and when the child asks about getting a shot, which makes the same point. A 55 word story that clarifies the context and focuses on this lack of connection could be very powerful.

Reviewer #3 suggests an initial free write, to identify salient lines that might later be crafted into a 55 word story. I concur this might be helpful.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II:** This is an excellent revision. Thank you for paying such careful attention to reviewer comments. The awful context of an MVA is now quite clear, and the inadvertently patronizing tone of the last line has been changed. We like it very much, and would like to suggest a few very minor revisions: 1) two "justs" in one 55 word story seemed excessive, so I recommend eliminating one. 2) The line about needles didn't really sound like a 5 year old, I felt the original line was more genuine. 3) The Ssh could probably go in order to keep you within the 55 word limit. Please consider these minor adjustments, and if you have better alternatives, please use them instead.

## DECISION LETTER 2

Thank you very much for submitting your manuscript "Five-year-old historian" for consideration for publication in Families, Systems, and Health. I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to review the manuscript. I have now received the reviews of your manuscript and am able to make an editorial decision. The current revision makes very clear the context in which this 5 year old kid becomes the primary "historian"; and the potentially patronizing tone of the final line has now been eliminated. The interaction about the mom's name is incredibly touching and skillfully underlines the poignancy of this situation.

With a few minor revisions to address primarily stylistic issues, this 55 word story will make a valuable contribution to the journal. I carefully considered your thoughts about the "shots" vs.

**"needles." I still like the way you introduced this issue initially - it sounded more like what a kid would say - but if you feel strongly, you can retain the reference to needles. Please see specific suggestions in the comments are appended below.**

### **DECISION LETTER 3**

**I am pleased to inform you that your work has now been accepted for publication in Families, Systems, and Health. Thank you so much for your revisions. The 55 word form imposes many constraints, and this piece now does a wonderful job of indirectly but powerfully conveying the emotions of a terrible tragedy. I think you have got the tone exactly right.**