

Lehigh Valley Health Network
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Department of Family Medicine

Scarred

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Life in 55 Words

Submissions for this special column were required to meet the following basic criteria: Relate—in exactly 55 words (not including the title)—an experience that influenced the author or author's practice of medicine. Submissions reflected a wide range of experiences and emotions.

(Fam Med 2011;43(2):123-4.)

Take Care of Your Mother

"Doctor, take care of your mother. I lost mine one month ago and now, I am missing her."

I thought about my job as a doctor. Always counseling everybody and many times forgetting that my life and my family's life are as vulnerable as anyone's. I kept that counseling from my patient in my heart.

Marco Aurélio Janaudis, MD

SOBRAMFA (Brazilian Society of Family Medicine)

Never Alone

Captivated by the harmony, I sat outside the old man's room. Generations filled it with their voices, summoned by the sons who had carried the patriarch in on a chair three days earlier. After midnight, the family filed out, all 17. "We're just helping Grandpa cross over." I entered and stayed until the journey's end.

William R. Phillips, MD, MPH

University of Washington

Priest

I'm not a Catholic priest wearing black robes. I wear a white coat. I've learned that behind every exam door lays the only confession booth some people have. Behind the exam room door many bare their souls to me, their physician, and they find peace and forgiveness for themselves, knowing that nothing leaves the room.

Benjamin J. Ingram, MD

Dewitt Army Community Hospital

Ft. Belvoir, VA

Scarred

A scarred face in the exam room. She is blind. The story of acid burns, yet so beautiful inside. We learn from her kindness. I develop a beautiful relationship with her. Then I change my job. She is a treasure I have lost. Need to find her. I have learned life's lessons from her.

Sweetie Jain, MD

Lehigh Valley Family Medicine Residency Program

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Hospice

Sometimes.

I can't change the outcome.

Bad things happen.

Masses grow

Lungs stiffen

Hearts soften

And people die.

Everyone does.

Even when I've tried

Really hard.

To postpone such discussions

My role eventually becomes

Nurturing.

To make your body comfortable

To help you sleep

To calm your fears.

As I say goodbye

To a friend.

Andrea Wendling, MD

Michigan State University College of Human Medicine

Experience

Two high-risk children. The mom, just 13, working the streets, living chaos complicated by heroin and spirochetes. Yet, she cared for her new baby with confidence. She met my doubts with folded arms: "Who do you think took care of all those babies my five older sisters had? My Mama and me." Hard-earned experience.

William R. Phillips, MD, MPH

University of Washington