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The Patient's Voice: View from the Hospital Bed and Room

People willingly believe what they wish.
—Chinese fortune cookie

Being a hospitalist provides us with many rewards in life: a secure job, decent income, intellectually stimulating experiences at work, and gratification from helping the patients we encounter. Importantly, without patients none of this would be possible. Their role in our work lives and their personal experience in the hospital vary dramatically from ours, and that experience may be relatively invisible to many of us. Be honest—have you fully recognized the apprehension and even terror experienced by some patients when nightfall sweeps through the hospital wards and the commotion and attention of the day shift dissipates?¹ Have you been fully aware of the desperate need of patients or their family members for timely communication of understandable information in the midst of critical illness?² We willingly believe what we wish—patients and their families are having a comforting experience while hospitalized, and we are doing wonderful jobs as hospitalists caring for them. However, the lay press indicates that the patient's perception may differ radically from this reassuring point of view.³

To comprehend fully the hospital experience of patients and their families, we can benefit from them telling us their stories. The narrative stories from a patient¹ and the wife of a patient² clearly convey the apprehension and fear both patients and their loved ones suffer. Without this appreciation, we cannot empathetically deliver the care patients deserve. Not surprisingly, as medical technology guides physicians to focus more on the disease instead of the person, a backlash of an increasing emphasis on patient-centered care is emerging.^{4,5} Through short essays on illuminating experiences of physicians, patients, or families of patients, I hope to bring the patient's perspective to the forefront of hospital medicine care. "View from the Hospital Bed" can educate us about patients' perspectives on the experience of being hospitalized. We can also learn from the families of patients in "View from the Hospital Room." The next time you recognize that a patient or family member has a potent story to tell (good or bad), encourage them to send it to us at the *Journal of Hospital Medicine*.

"...For the secret of the care of the patient is in caring for the patient."
—Francis W. Peabody, MD
October 21, 1925

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