

Fall 2022

Empowerment - The Fine Print Behind a Conflict

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Recommended Citation

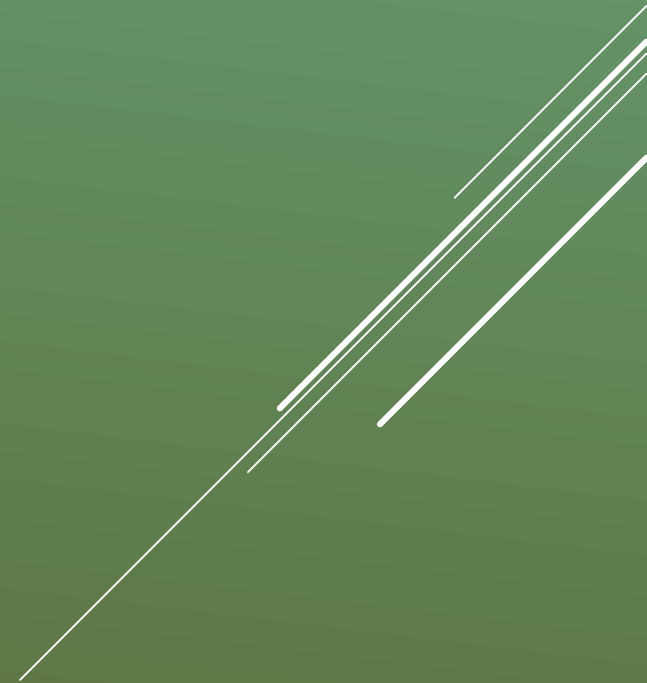
Hirani, Dhruvi (2022) "Empowerment - The Fine Print Behind a Conflict," *be Still*: Vol. 6, Article 19.

Available at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/bestill/vol6/iss1/19>

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This piece is about the author's realization
of the power of conflict.

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT



Empowerment - The Fine Print Behind a Conflict

The nurse practitioner tapped my shoulder. “Our next patient is pregnant and homeless,” she whispers. We go into the room. I see the patient in agony, not speaking. The nurse practitioner listens to the fetal heart rate, and we leave. After a two-minute interaction, I am left alone wondering if the patient is alright. Minutes later, I see her sluggishly walking out of the room. To my surprise, a medical assistant catches the patient trying to leave. I rush over to help the MA carry her back to her room as she collapses. Ms. A? Can you hear us, Ms. A? She is delirious. We check her blood pressure – it is low.

“When was the last time you ate Ms. A?” we ask as she moans and points to her purse. I rummage through her purse looking for food. I hold her hand as she struggles to chew the granola bar. The MA leaves. I am left alone, unsure what to do besides provide comfort to my patient as I hide fear behind my smile. Uncertainty hides behind every hand squeeze. The provider yells through her office, “make sure you lay her on her left side.” I did. Ten minutes later the provider yells the same thing. I am annoyed. Why am I the only one attending to the patient? No one ever came.

The provider yells to inform me that the patient is free to go after her blood pressure is better. I am angry. That's it? The provider doesn't deem fit to check on her patient even once? No, eating chips is more important to her. The patient leaves and I talk to the provider. “What happened to the patient? Will she be OK?” “Nothing”, the provider responds. “These homeless women just want to have sex without thinking.” My heart drops. I knew the provider lacked compassion a bit with her patients, but this was extreme. I decide to report her to the medical director.

I am scared. "I'd like to report an incident but would like to keep the provider anonymous." He seems friendly at first. What he says next is something I can never forget. "I know who you are talking about. While I understand what you seemed to have seen, I can assure you she has compassion. You may have misread the situation. And you said the patient was homeless? Well, that is what happens when you drop out of school. Besides, some care, even poor-quality care, is better than no care."

I was hit with helplessness. The same helplessness that the homeless, pregnant patient must have felt. Tears start to roll down my cheeks. Me, a third-year medical student, tried my best to give a voice to a patient who did not have one. It was met with a firm dismissal. Mustering the courage to speak up against what I know is wrong, seems to have gone in vain.

Upon reflection – I carry a strengthened desire to continue to advocate and stand up for what is right. This experience empowers me. It motivates me to continue my journey through medical school. Seeing and hearing something so wrong makes me want to work even harder to make it right. Maybe one day, I might even become a medical director myself, listening to others and speaking up for those who cannot.



Dhruti Hirani is a third-year medical student who likes to express her experiences through writing. Currently, she is interested in helping underserved communities.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

