



Incomplete Storytelling

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Our interviews, physical exams, and laboratory tests only uncover select words of a patient's story. Some days we may be lucky enough to stumble upon a phrase or complete sentence in their life's tome. We base our diagnoses on these incomplete discoveries and hope for the best. Some of us may act like we have the Rosetta Stone in our pocket, granting us the ability to translate everything into our noble medical language. Others may focus too much time on the details of the letters and completely miss the story behind them. Deciphering the story of each patient requires not only a stellar medical acumen but also an ability to comprehend stories in languages that may seem foreign to us.

The story of each patient never concludes. Each moment spent will reveal some new piece of history, emotional understanding, or bit of data. Unexpected findings may leave us awestruck or dumbfounded, changing the way we perceive the patient's story or causing us to investigate certain details further. A microarray can provide a wealth of information, but can also distort our understandings of each other. We have entered a world of curiosity, discomfort, joy, sadness, confusion, and enlightenment. We have agreed to the challenge of caring for our myriad of patients. We have begun to realize the art of knowing them through incomplete storytelling.