

What's in a Name?

John S. Andrews, MD

Ambulatory Pediatrics 2007;7:3-4

My wife is one of 12 children. All of her siblings had their own children before we had our first. And they used all the names. When our daughter was born, we couldn't decide what to name her. We pored over books. We consulted friends and family. We considered the implications of certain names. Would it be shortened to a nickname? Did it alliterate with our last name? Wasn't that the name of the bully in your neighborhood when you were a kid? I never imagined it would be so difficult.

Now I feel like I'm going through it all over again. *Ambulatory Pediatrics* has developed a new section of the journal, a home for publication of authors' narratives of their personal experiences of pediatrics. Dr Anjali Jain and I have been asked to edit this new section. It is an exciting opportunity for us. We've had many enthusiastic discussions about our vision for the section and look forward to creative submissions from our colleagues. But part of our responsibility in creating this new section is to give it a name.

A name will identify this part of the journal for years to come. When the mascot for the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta was unveiled, its name was "Whatizit." Confused, the public rebelled. The mascot became a laughingstock, leading *Time* magazine to refer to it as "a sperm in sneakers." Organizers scrambled, renaming it "Kirby," only to find the name was already licensed. Ultimately, he was named "Izzy." But the damage had been done: the poor mascot was associated with a bad name in perpetuity.

Just as the Olympic organizers hoped for their mascot's name, we want the name of the section to be recognizable, to engage the interest of the new reader, and to draw subscribers to look forward to reading it. But if it's too catchy, it might appear forced or unnecessarily cute. It could get stuck in the minds of readers and condemn us to a lifelong association with it, the Whatizits of the journalistic world. It is worth being thoughtful.

Anjali and I agreed that the name for our new section should not exceed the length of the first submission. This was a start. There has been a recent trend in journal submissions toward lengthy and highly descriptive titles. They have lots of colons. This has practical ramifications, overloading the formatting in electronic templates for submission. Marketing research suggests that a new company

name should be easy to remember, easy to pronounce, and no more than 11 letters in length. Not twelve. Eleven.

As new parents often do, we looked to relatives. Other journals have sections devoted to narrative content, each with its own name. *JAMA* has "A Piece of My Mind." This reflects the personal nature of the writing that is published there. But it sounds a bit self-assured and provocative—not very pediatric. (Or maybe too pediatric, as we've all offered it to our children at some point in time.) The journal *Health Affairs* has a long-running column titled "Narrative Matters." I like that. It's clever. "Matters" can be a noun, suggesting content, or a verb, suggesting relevance. I wish I'd thought of it first. *Annals of Internal Medicine* publishes a section titled "On Being a Doctor." That's personal, but it harkens to a time when our profession was the sole context for our lives—doctors first, parents and spouses second. And frankly, many of our members are not physicians. "On Being a Health Care Provider/Educator/Researcher" is a bit unwieldy, and it violates our length standard. These are all good names, and they helped generate good ideas. But our name would be unique. It would not come from within the family.

Obviously, the name should reflect the content of the section. But it is difficult to assign a descriptive name when there is no content, when not a word has been submitted or published. If the name is overly proscriptive, it will limit the scope of what is submitted and impose a personality on the section. A name such as "Pediatric Poetry" might limit the volume of submissions—an undesirable situation for a fledgling forum. Assigning a name forces us to consider a clear vision for what will be published there.

So we did the hard work of considering what we wished to see published in the section and what we thought you would most like to read. We decided to publish narrative pieces about your research, your contact with patients, the influence of mentors, the impact of policy and current events, and the relationship of your work to your lives and the lives of others. We seek essays that describe these experiences and make connections to larger themes in pediatric education, research, policy, and clinical care.

As we discussed this, it became clear that another objective we have is to promote interest in narrative writing among the APA membership. We hope this section will lead you to write more, to be observant and share those observations, and to document moments that influence your thinking. All of us have stories of colleagues, patients, and experiences that inform the work we do. We share these stories with one another at work, at meetings, and in our correspondence. Anjali and I invite you to

From the Pediatric Residency Program, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn.

Address correspondence to John S. Andrews, MD, Pediatric Residency Program, MMC 391, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455 (e-mail: andrews@umn.edu).

submit those stories for publication so they can be shared with a larger audience.

In the end, naming this section of the journal is indeed like naming a child, ultimately less important than we think it is at the time the decision is made. Just as we come to know people and their names simply identifies them, the title will simply be a signpost to rich narrative stories from our colleagues that relate the breadth and depth of their experience. Anjali and I hope you will consider submitting your stories to our new section, regardless of its name.

Eventually, my daughter's name just occurred to us. In a moment of quiet reflection, I looked at my wife and said, "How about Lucy?" She smiled back, and in that moment we knew it was her name. Later that day, a nun in the hospital where she was born inquired about her name. We

told her it was Lucy, and she chuckled. "Ah, Saint Lucy. Got her eyes plucked out." We hoped she was the only one who knew this and that it wouldn't be a point of reference for others who met our beautiful daughter. It hasn't been, and over the last 14 years, she's proved our instincts correct. She is Lucy.

For the section, we chose the name "In the Moment." It refers to the experiences you will write about to describe how influential those moments have been. And it refers to the need to live in the moment so the significance of those encounters is not lost. Or it's just the name we picked. In the coming years, you'll let us know if our instincts were correct.

"In the Moment." Eleven letters. It's a good place to start.