

Professional Development of the Physician Seminar
Pediatrics – 3rd Year Medical Students

Critical Incident Report Assignment

What is a “critical incident”?

We would like you to write a narrative account of a “critical incident” which occurs during your pediatric rotation, on another rotation, or during medical school. A “critical incident” may be defined as an event or experience you judge to be especially meaningful to you as you interact with patients and their families, interns, residents, attending physicians, and other staff members. It may be meaningful because it is extremely positive and inspiring, difficult and challenging, disturbing or troublesome, or because it simply raises questions and concerns you find yourself wrestling with. For this assignment, we would like you to focus on an incident whose meaning derives not from what you perceive as a purely clinical matter, but one, which involves the human dimension of practicing medicine. It may or may not be one, which we have discussed during the seminar. It could address a philosophical, psychological, cultural, spiritual, or religious dimension of medical care or whatever comes to mind or to heart.

What should the narrative account include?

First, simply write a brief account of what happened as you remember it and from your perspective. This should include your response to the situation and how it affected you. You may think about the following questions to help you write it: What happened? Who was involved? What was my immediate response and feeling about it? Write this as soon after the event as you can.

Second, take time to write it up from the perspective of each of the other main players, as you imagine it to be. This, too, should be written as soon after the event as possible.

Third, write a brief narrative to describe your reflections on the incident in retrospect. What about it made an impact on you? How have you come to understand what it meant to you at this point in your training? What questions remain?