Not So Simple

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It’s not so simple. It isn’t easy. They aren’t all the same.

For you, it feels like the millionth time you’ve seen this chief complaint tonight.
It’s not. Even though it feels that way.

You’re tired and irritated and getting frustrated trying to not be irritated.

But for them, it’s the first time. The only time. The worst time.

They’ve never seen their child look like this, feel like this.
Never have they been in such a foreign landscape, your playground. Never heard the hiss of suction. Never jumped with every beep of the monitors and machines. Never seen their child’s face so unrecognizable and obscured with the oxygen cannula and feeding tube.

They have to trust you since you introduced yourself as the doctor and you hold all the cards. You have the answers they so desperately want. Will she get better? How long will this last? When can we go home?

After you collect the nuts and bolts of the story, you tell them what to expect. You take a deep breath and ensure that you don’t hurry through this last part, you need to be heard. You promise to take care of their daughter and answer the lingering questions they still have.

They thank you, even though you haven’t done anything yet.

Except you did.

You took on some of their worry and lightened the burden.
That reassurance, it’s not so simple.

For this work, Dr. Deutsch was the Prose Award Winner for Medicinal Musings at the 2022 CHRI Pediatric Research Forum.
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