



## Patient-centered care from a parent's perspective

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Dear Editors,

As a health care educator and a mother, I appreciated reading the four articles of the “Patient Experience in Pediatric Radiology” minisymposium in the October 2020 issue of *Pediatric Radiology*. These articles discussed different approaches to improve pediatric patients’ experiences in the radiology department. Reading these articles reminded me of my recent experience accompanying my now 10-year-old son through a number of scans during and after cancer treatment for the past two years at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis, TN, and a general hospital in a metropolitan area. I can testify that the efforts made by pediatric radiology departments do make a difference to patients and families.

Right after my son’s cancer diagnosis, we went to the diagnostic radiology department in a general hospital to confirm the cancer staging. I was still in shock with the news but tried my best to prepare my son for the scans. How do you explain to an 8-year-old about MRI, CT, contrasts and fasting? We found a few videos on YouTube, but they did not help me to envision how my son could lie in the giant machine with a loud noise for an extended period of time. Furthermore, the videos did not really portray how loud the noise could be, nor how it would feel to be in such a confined space. We went to the diagnostic radiology department with uncertainty and fear. A staffer came to me to do the consent process. He read through the list on the consent form, including one item on the possible side effects of another cancer. I was still in shock about the diagnosis and now heard that the scans could cause a secondary cancer. It was just beyond what I could imagine. I

looked at the staffer blankly after he finished talking. He was probably in a huge rush, so asked me, “Do you understand English?”

Contrary to our experience at the radiology department in the general hospital, our experience with the Pediatric Radiology Department at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital exemplified patient- and family-centered care. For the days when my son had scans, the radiology department tried to schedule babies and younger children for the earlier slots during the day so they did not stay on NPO for long. Before my son’s radiation therapy, the child life specialist spent a good amount of time explaining to him what the proton beam treatment was, answered his and our questions, and demonstrated the process on the computer with him. With all of this help, my son managed to finish his 28-day proton treatment without daily sedation.

Having experienced the benefits of patient- and family-centered care, I support radiology departments in adopting these measures and working to make them more accessible in all hospitals.

I have explained the publication of this account with my son, who has given his assent.

### Compliance with ethical standards

**Conflicts of interest** None

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