Girija Autoimmunity

Responses to review comments:

**Review Comments:**

1. This is a reflective personal essay that foregrounds patient narrative in the context of medicalised discourses of the patient’s body over several years. The narrative also takes into account the socio-cultural situatedness in which these discourses travel – for instance, the challenges of gender identification under social duress and their repercussions on the body. More importantly, it asks us to consider the question of voice, the bearing of testimony to the distress of the body and mind through a self-crafted narrative. The experience then has to speak to/for many but has to be rooted in the particular. This essay does this competently.

No doubt, there is a definite need for such narratives in the field of bioethics in our country

GV: I deeply appreciate the reviewer's unbiased understanding of the purpose of my narrative.

2.  Considering that we are seeing a perceptible and sharp rise in auto-immune conditions, and with the growing awareness that people will have to find medical, social, psychological and emotive solutions that are individualized to their health situations, this is a timely and topical essay to publish.

3. It is not too specialized for the journal and one can expect readers to reflect both on their personal experiences as well as on the complexities of the field.

3.   4.  The essay is unlikely to influence policy, but one certainly hopes and thinks it will be influence practice and attitudes—there is clearly a felt need for more narratives of this kind.

GV: (points 2,3 and 4 above) I am grateful that the reviewer finds this article, despite its subjective narrative style, worthy of being published in a reputed journal amidst other more objective and scientific presentations.

4.    Since this is a personal essay, it is important to honour the information that the writer brings to the table and the narrative shape that they give to it. The generalisations and omissions would also be part of this process, so I have no concerns in this regard.

GV: Acceptance of the essay's subjective nature is highly appreciated.

5.    5. I would urge the writer (and editor) to please re-consider the use of Italics in the essay – they are not needed. This is a well-written piece and carries several kinds of emphases, both thematic and stylistic, and the added visual emphasis provided by the italics felt distracting and over-wrought. The point being made will be more fluidly and productively received without it.

GV: I totally agree with this point. I have removed all the italics used for visual emphasis. Only instances where it was used for contextual emphasis have been retained. (Please see version comparison document attached to verify these changes.)

6.   I also have a thought about the visual accompanying the piece. While it is helpful and relevant, I felt a little uncomfortable with the nature of the woman’s silhouette. It inadvertently reinforces the stereotype of the willowy slim long-haired, skirt-clad body as that of a woman. It also invites the reader to imagine the writer in that body type. I would strongly recommend a more neutral silhouette.

GV: My initial thought was to select a silhouette that can convey that inside a suave body can be an ongoing inflammatory battle. But I agree with the possible bias it can bring into the reader's mind. However, it was a little difficult for me finalize a neutral silhouette, which would resonate with reviewer's definition of 'neutral'. Hence, I have provided two alternative images within the document to select from. (Accordingly, the image master file and the reference links therein have also been updated.)

7.  It could not have been easy to find a voice for this piece that is neither of the victim nor the reformer, but grounded in a strong sense of claiming the narrative of one’s own health and body. I admire what has been accomplished and I wish the writer the very best.

GV: Thank you very much for these positive words.

I have made some cosmetic changes to improve the flow and language of the article, which can also be viewed in the version comparison document. (Please select "view changes" option to see the edits.)

Please let me know if I have overlooked any step/comment in this process.

Warm regards,

Girija

-------------------------------