

### Does the Age of Your Doctor Matter?

#### 1 To the Editor:

I agree with Dr. Haider Javed Warraich (“For Doctors, Age May Be More Than a Number,” by Sunday Review, Jan. 7): young doctors have many good qualities that have nothing to do with age, for better or worse, but when he writes that “nothing is more reassuring to patients than seeing a silver-haired doctor walk up to their bedside,” I have to disagree.

To the contrary, seeing a silver-haired doctor walk up to my bedside could give me plenty of concern about his experience with modern techniques and recent medical research.

FIONA BAYLY, NEW YORK

#### 2 To the Editor:

Haider Javed Warraich correctly identifies the worst of old-school medical practice: arrogant doctors who rely on anecdotal experience. As a psychiatrist and a medical school clinical faculty member for 30 years, I have learned a lot from my students. They are dedicated to social justice, attentive to language and more aware of policy, ethics and social determinants of health.

What they struggle with, however, and what remains an area poorly addressed in their training is the more nuanced interpersonal domain. If tradition blinds older doctors, ideology can blind younger ones.

Holding impeccable values does not help them engage authentically, with honest, insightful emotional awareness. Needing to understand an individual patient requires more than machine-learning, big data, political correctness or treatment algorithms.

Psychological depth may be the real new frontier of sound medical care. It can also reduce error, burnout and patient dissatisfaction.

SARAH HARTLEY, OAKLAND, CALIF.

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