

CHAMPION PROVIDER FELLOWSHIP

A Powerful Approach to Healthier Communities

Persuasive Narrative Sample: Fadra Whyte (Cohort 4)

Hannah's Story

Hannah was a very sweet pre-teen, but during her first visit to my office, she was quiet and never smiled. Although she didn't say it, her body language gave it all away—the brown and black cavities made her embarrassed of her smile.

After speaking to her I learned that Hannah's parents bought cases of soda on a weekly basis from the local bulk food discount store. Hannah herself admitted to drinking 4-5 cans of soda a day. This was clearly one of the main contributors to her dental decay.

Fixing Hannah's teeth took months, but during this time I encouraged her to slowly change her habits and by the end of her treatment she was routinely drinking water and rarely having any soda. In the months that followed, Hannah would return for dental check-ups. She was talkative, laughing, and her smile lit up the room.

Unfortunately, while Hannah made this major change, her parents were still buying soda by the case. Even in the face of this temptation, Hannah stuck to her commitment, wanting to protect her beautiful new smile. Sadly, Hannah revealed that her mom is now suffering from severe dental pain. She's not able to find an adult dentist who would take her insurance, so she's suffering in silence.

Allowing counties to tax sugar sweetened beverages would create a financial reason for parents to stop buying soda and would prevent the pain and social anguish that Hannah went through. Hannah's story is not unique, but you can play a role. Support a tax on the same sugary drinks that rob too many other Hannah's of their smile and their health.



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Persuasive Narrative Sample: Dr. Gila Dorostkar (Cohort 4)

1-Year-Old's Tooth Decay Leads to Family Preventative Care

My patient, Nina, is a delightful little two-year old, but when I first met her, she was a child in agony – unable to sleep through the night, play or even eat proper meals because of dental caries. Her parents had tried numbing her teeth with a gel and weren't sure if they should take Nina to her pediatrician or a dentist. Unfortunately, when they did go to a dentist, he lacked the experience working with very young children and recommended no treatment, resulting in rapid progression of decay.

That poor experience, their lack of understanding, limited income and fear of submitting their daughter to anesthesia, made Nina's parents feel like failures. It all came to a head, however, when Nina woke with a swollen face and had to be rushed for a traumatizing emergency extraction. Fortunately, Nina finally got the care she needed, but her fear of dentists is now well-ingrained, and her parents are facing substantial medical bills.

If there's a silver-lining to this story, it's that Nina's parents aren't about to let the same happen to Nina's 1-year-old brother. I'm seeing both their children for regular preventative care check-ups. And they've made it a point to tell their friends and family about the importance of bringing children as young as one in for regular check-ups, where dental problems can be diagnosed early to avoid high-risk, costly treatments. They even told their story to Nina's pediatrician, suggesting she tell all her patients how important it is to get early preventative dental care.

Just as vaccines and good nutrition are a vital part of medical prevention, pediatricians need to recognize the importance of preventative dental visits for very young children. They can make sure no other children have to relive Nina's nightmare by suggesting parents give their children a healthy dental start.



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Persuasive Narrative Sample: Dr. Kristen Hughes (Cohort 4)

Digital Tablets Caused Depression and Social Isolation

Camila is a lovely 6-year-old patient who loves school. She would show up in class with a beaming smile, ready to learn. When the pandemic hit last year, she and her parents were glad she could stay safe by staying home. And Camila also worried about her teacher, wanting Mrs. Green to be safe.

Camila's parents were grateful for the school's efforts to arrange for remote learning, helping to arrange for reliable internet service and to navigate the new technology. Camila loved the new tablet they provided, something her family could have never afforded. Remote learning was fun at first and Camila loved seeing her friends. It wasn't long, however, before the novelty wore off and Camila grew bored, lost interest and turned to snacking to break up the monotony.

After a while, Camila became depressed. She missed her friends, she missed her teacher, she missed playing outside. But her mom reminded her she had to pay attention, sit at the table and do her Zoom school. Bored, sad and isolated, she eventually found a computer game she could play while Zoom class played in the background.

When I saw her 9 months into the pandemic, I hardly recognized her. She had gained 30 pounds, became pre-diabetic, developed fatty liver, and was depressed. When I offered help, her mom tearfully asked, "can I give the tablet back, I think it is making her sick".

Unfortunately, I encounter stories like Camila's multiple times per day in my clinic now. As a local pediatrician responsible for the health of our most vulnerable community members, I implore you to re-open schools in person and remove the tablets as a means of primary education from our schools.



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Persuasive Narrative Sample: Dr. Vivian Yang (Cohort 4)

A Little Nudge to Get on the Right Track

I would like to tell you about my patient, Tommy, an obese 11-year-old who turned his life around with structured and incentivized physical activity.

Since the COVID pandemic started, Tommy had gained 20 pounds and based on his BMI, he was in the obese category. Initially, it was difficult to get him to agree to any sort of physical activity that did not involve video games—the one activity where he could be in regular touch with his friends from school.

Eventually, I showed him some family-friendly YouTube workout videos and, at the insistence of his younger brother, he promised he would try it 3 times a week. In return, I promised him we would have a push up contest in 1 month if he kept his end of the bargain.

Four weeks later, Tommy stepped on the scale in my office and had dropped an impressive 5 pounds. He was still in the overweight category, but his progress and improved energy served as an intrinsic motivation to stick with his exercise plan. He told me that his family had started doing nightly workouts together, allowing him to feel as a part of a community.

Because of this simple intervention, Tommy was able to turn his and his family's life around in the middle of what could have been a devastating and isolating year.

There's a lot more Tommies out there that need a little support, guidance and direction to protect their health during this time of pandemic isolation. As you all know, healthy students are better learners, better behaved and more likely to attend classes. As a school board, you can help by supporting our physical activity and nutrition incentive program targeting families and children of all ages.

Oh, by the way, Tommy creamed me in the push up contest!



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Persuasive Narrative Sample: Dr. Melissa Campos (Cohort 4)

Cheap Soda Leads to Expensive Health Problems

“David,” a 7-year-old boy, came into my office recently. During the pandemic, David has had to switch to virtual schooling. Both his parents are working different shifts to make sure one parent is always at home. During his well child exam, his BMI was in the 99th percentile, making him dangerously obese. He also has high cholesterol, but thankfully does not have diabetes.

David’s mom knows he’s overweight but she notes that he’s a good boy and she rewards him with a soda for getting his homework done. David loves his sodas, and besides, she says, they’re inexpensive and easier than buying him a toy every time he earns a reward. We discussed potential lifestyle changes and David’s mom is going to try to give him less soda, but she knows it isn’t going to be easy to wean him off of sugary, cheap drinks.

Sadly, David is not unique. I see many children who struggle with being overweight or obese and they usually are drinking soda or other sugar sweetened beverages. If these drinks weren’t so inexpensive, I believe that parents would think twice about buying these cheaper drinks for their children.

If we could reduce consumption of these drinks, we could not only improve the health of children like David, but also their performance in school and possibly reduce healthcare costs over the course of David’s life. It just makes good sense for the county to consider a sugar sweetened beverage tax. Not only could it discourage these sugary drinks that affect the health of our children, but it could also raise revenues to pay for programs that help children facing weight and health challenges like David.



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Persuasive Narrative Sample: Dr. Madhu Raghavan (Cohort 3)

Kaleah was a cheery 11-year-old who loved her family and her rich social life. But when I first met her in the clinic, she was depressed and suffering from childhood obesity.

As I spoke with Kaleah, I learned that the 17-year-old brother she idolized, a standout player on his high school baseball team, had recently suffered a stroke and was in therapy to relearn how to walk and talk. When the doctors explained to Kaleah's parents that the stroke was probably connected to her brother's diet and weight, Kaleah became doubly concerned.

At home, her mother and abuela were amazing cooks. There always seemed to be a pot of carne on the stove and fresh, homemade tortillas. Her Abuela loved to spoil the children with a coke and encouraged them to drink tall glasses of orange juice or 'liquado,' which was rich with whole milk.

Was this what gave her brother a stroke, she wondered.

Fortunately, I was able to connect Kaleah to a series of free nutrition classes offered by the county's migrant education program. Kaleah was a sponge. She'd not only attended every class, but she began searching on her phone more about how to read nutrition labels. She made it her mission to work on eating healthy, buying healthy food and getting regular exercise. Not just for herself, but her whole family, and especially for her recovering brother.

The last time I saw her, Kaleah's smile was radiant. She was brimming with pride as she told me about the cooking classes she'd taken and her expertise in reading nutrition labels. Just last week, she said, she had an amazing day with her whole family; walking to the park, holding her Abuela's hand and sitting with her brother enjoying the nutritious picnic she'd helped her mom make. The entire family had lost weight and were feeling better than ever. She confided in me that she'd gotten her whole family to join her for some of those nutrition classes, and her mom now always takes her shopping since Kaleah was the family wiz at reading nutrition labels. Her friends call her "Ms. Healthy," she giggles.

But what really made the day special, Kaleah told me, was her brother has improved so much, that he was able to teach her a few baseball tricks. With his coaching, maybe she'll join the school's baseball team this spring.



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Persuasive Narrative Sample: Dr. Marie Buell (Cohort 3)

Ensuring Our Role as Patient Advocate

Let me tell you a story about a patient, Maria, was referred to me. Maria is 60-year-old registered dental assistant who travels with her boss, a RDHAP and provides much needed care to the elderly in our county. Unfortunately, Maria, who had severe oral pain affecting her vision and had no access to dental insurance or medical care. Because of the pandemic, she was given access to the Denti-Cal program. She was treated at a local medical clinic, where she was given three rounds of antibiotics. She was also referred to ENT and an ophthalmologist and had an MRI.

Despite all these expensive but futile appointments, Maria was still in pain when she finally figured out how to get a dental visit and I saw her in my office. It was clear she was suffering from a severe tooth abscess. I removed the tooth and she immediately said she could breathe and see better.

Tragically, this simple solution only came after Maria suffered for months, missed work and experienced undue pain, anxiety and stress. What's more, what could have been easily and affordably addressed with simple dental care, instead ended up leading to huge county costs for unnecessary emergency tests and services.

As dentists, we have all seen similar situations. Unfortunately, dental care becomes the last resort, when in too many cases it should clearly be the first.

It's important that we protect patients like Maria by making sure dentists have a strong voice in government decisions about these patients. Dental health care professionals have to have a strong voice in shaping programs like Denti-Cal so that Maria and the thousands of patients you know just like her, get the quality dental care they need and deserve.



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